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High-end heroes

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ON TEST

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Zero Edge
Harman/Kardon
BDS 470
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EN GARDE!

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slice their way
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- STRAW DOGS
- CONTAGION
- KILLER ELITE
- RED STATE
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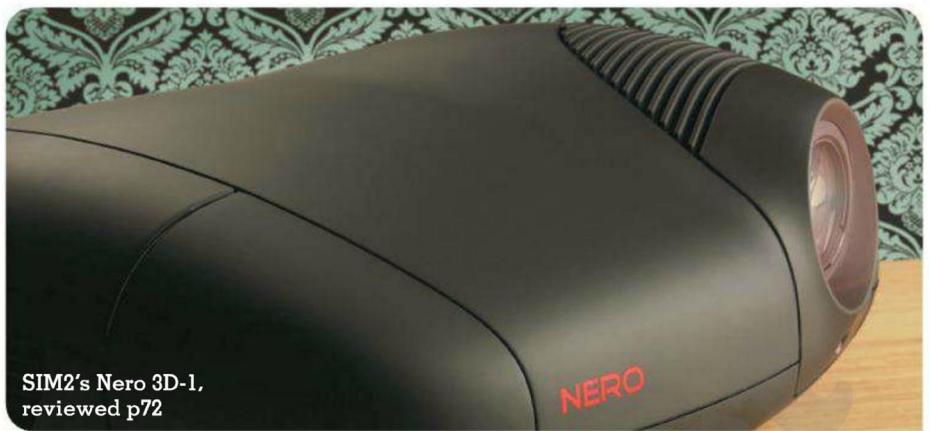
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SIM2's Nero 3D-1, reviewed p72

WELCOME

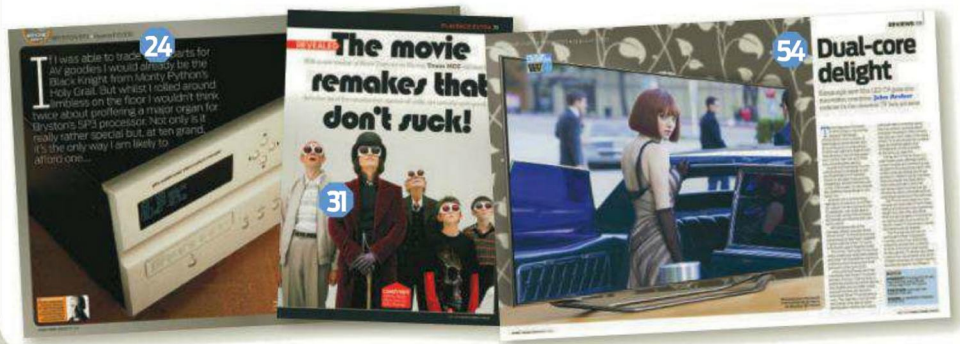
A survey conducted by Sony in Japan has revealed that 3D comes 18th out of a list of 20 priorities for TV buyers. Now that is a shock – especially, I would imagine, to the marketing departments that have spent all their money in the last two years on a heavy 3D push. Now I'm assuming, and hoping, that you wouldn't get the same results if the survey was about projectors. **If I was in the market for a new projector, I'd put 3D playback at the top of my wishlist** – big screen, lights out, bag of popcorn... What's not to like? It's the closest you can get to going out to the cinema, and that's what buying and installing your own system is all about.



With that in mind, this issue we've put two 3D projectors to the test – Sony's VPL-VW95ES and SIM2's Nero 3D-1. The former costs £5,000, the latter costs £13,000. Well, I didn't say home cinema heaven was cheap, did I?

Deputy Editor

Mark Craven



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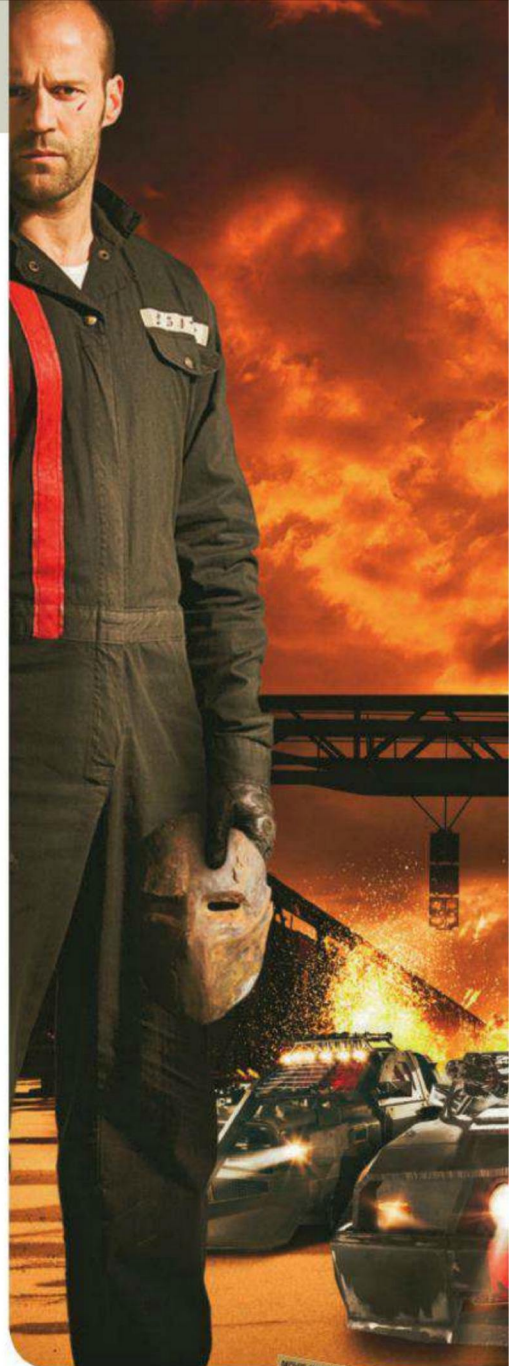
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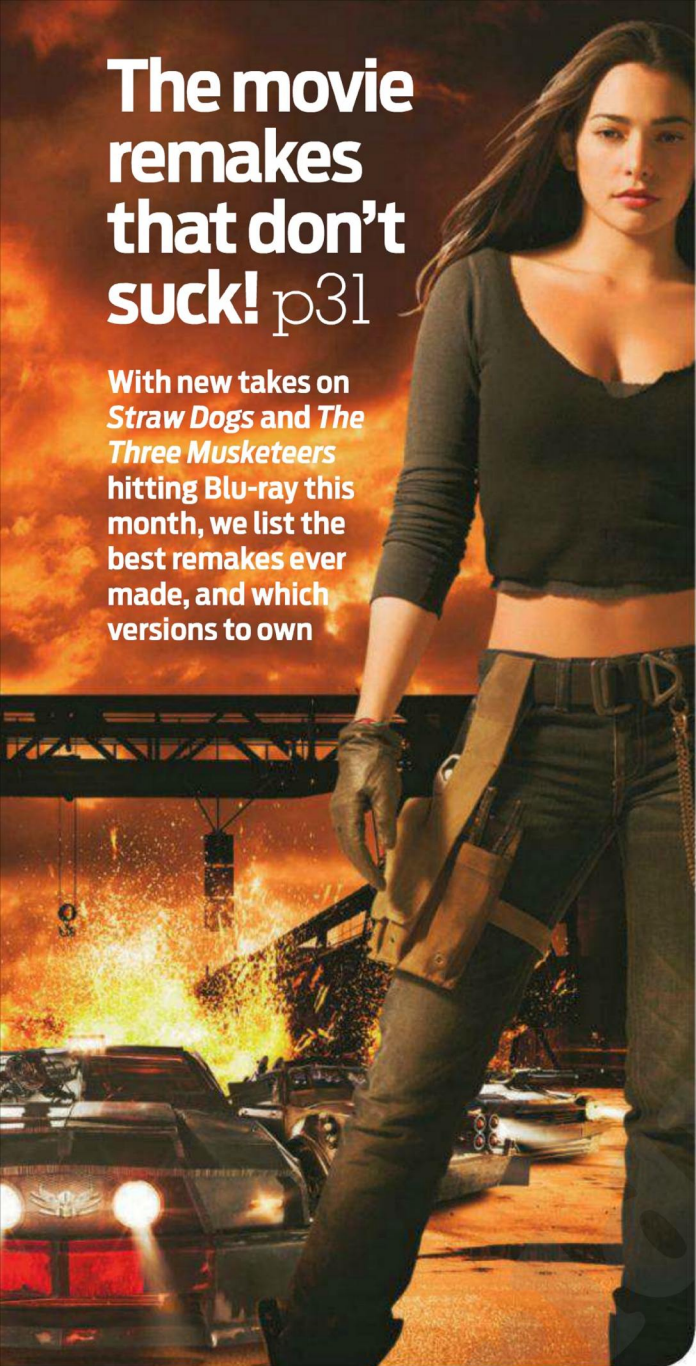
Adrian Justins:

Made his name as the editor of *What Video & TV* and *What Home Cinema*



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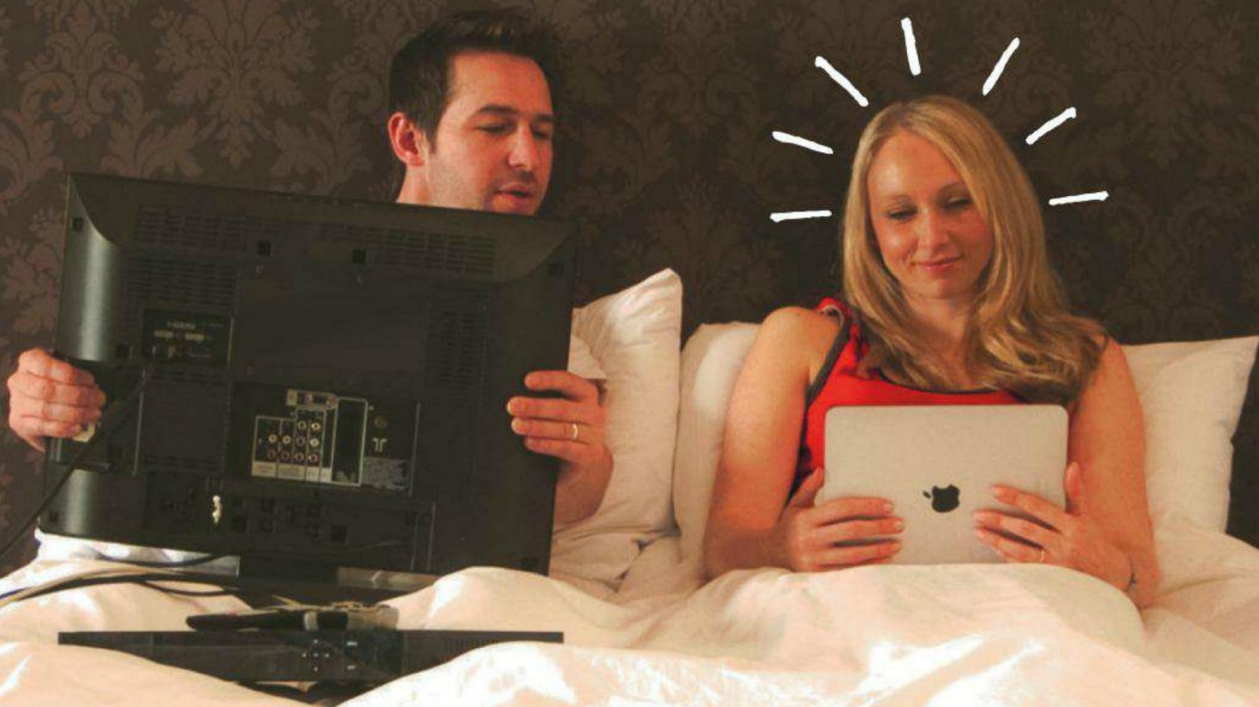
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BULLETIN

→ **News highlights** **MARTINLOGAN** Centre and surrounds added to EM-ESL range **BOWERS & WILKINS** Revamped Mini Theatre array unveiled **SONY** Why it's adding Passive 3DTVs to its arsenal **KALEIDESCAPE** Future players will support 3D **NEWS X10** Hot stories in bite-size chunks **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO** US remake hits Blu-ray **AND MUCH MORE!**

Multi-view marvel

Onkyo TX-NR414 → www.onkyo.co.uk



Looking for a feature-rich 5.1 AV receiver that won't break the bank? Onkyo reckons you should look no further than this new 2012 model.

The recently-launched £400 TX-NR414 marks the consumer AVR debut of InstaPrevue tech, a clever feature that provides live onscreen video thumbnails of the content playing on all HDMI-connected devices. Additionally, Hybrid Standby allows HDMI pass-through to a TV while the receiver is off and means that the NR414 can be switched on by Onkyo Remote Apps.

Other features include a claimed 5 x 130W power, six HDMI inputs, one HDMI input with ARC and wireless-capable home networking.

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Logan's re-run

MartinLogan ElectroMotion ESL → www.absolutesounds.com

Launched last year, MartinLogan's EM-ESL floorstander (pictured) has gone down a storm in the hi-fi world thanks to its affordable price and hybrid design, which marries a potent 8in bass driver with the brand's trademark electrostatic speaker.

So why should multichannel fans care? Well, MartinLogan has now introduced the EM-C2 centre speaker (£790) and EM-FX2 satellites (£645 each) – meaning the EM-ESLs (£2,500 per pair) can now form the basis of a acoustically-matched home cinema system. And if you want to add a dedicated sub, the company's Dynamo range is a perfect fit.

Partner with...

NAD T 567

Premium 3D Blu-ray player
£600 approx



There's no point buying great speakers if you don't have a high-quality source component to start with. Which is where NAD's third-generation BD deck comes in. The T 567 features uPnP and DLNA Wi-Fi connectivity, Full HD 3D video playback and can be connected to automated home systems such as Control4, Crestron and AMX via its IR input.
www.armourhome.co.uk

Budget PJ



Optoma has introduced an affordable new Full HD projector, the HD23. Successor

to 2009's HD20, this new 2500 ANSI Lumen model is designed to deliver SMPTE-standard brightness on screen sizes of up to 5m and will set you back a paltry £800. And even if this budget approach means that it's not the most feature-packed projector you'll ever see, the HD23 still offers a 5000:1 contrast ratio, BrilliantColor picture-processing technology, twin HDMI v1.3 inputs, 4,000-hour lamp life and a five-year guarantee.

www.optoma.co.uk

Humax revamp



Following earlier success with Sky+HD boxes, Russ Andrews Accessories has now been tinkering with

Humax's popular Freeview and Freesat HD devices. The upgraded set-top boxes (priced £611, including a 14-day trial and money-back guarantee) promise significant improvements to the internal circuitry, thanks to the use of Panasonic audio-grade capacitors and acoustic casework damping amongst the many changes. 'The resulting improvements in the audio and video surpassed even our expectations,' says the brand.

www.russandrews.com

Archipel are go!



Cabasse is bringing the benefits of its co-axial drive technology to the world of custom install with the debut of a new

five-strong Archipel range of in-ceiling and in-wall speakers.

Priced £200 and up, all of the speakers in the lineup are supplied with magnetic fixing grilles, in both round and square forms, and come in a paintable white finish.

According to the company, the use of its co-axial tech is particularly suited to in-ceiling speakers, due to its wide dispersion characteristics 'significantly' simplify positioning.

www.cabasse.com/en

Playlist...

Team HCC reveals its Playback picks of the last month



Tron: Legacy 3D (All-region BD)

It didn't set the box office alight, but this sci-fi flick has real staying power on Blu-ray and offers up some exceptional 3D visuals

Game of Thrones: The Complete First Season (All-region BD)



Last year's most addictive and engrossing TV show comes home in a stunning hi-def boxset packed with fascinating extras. Simply unmissable

Warrior (Region B BD)



This sports drama packs a real punch on your home cinema, even if the BD isn't too pretty

Final Destination 5 in 3D (All-region BD)



There's no shortage of 3D thrills to be savoured in this entertainingly daft Blu-ray shocker. Gore fans will lap it up

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (Xbox 360/PS3/PC)



The videogame equivalent of *Game of Thrones* (see above) *Skyrim* is an epic role-playing game that will keep you going for months

Home Tech Show canned

CEDIA blames lack of industry support for CI expo cancellation

This year's Home Technology Event, the annual custom install show organised by CEDIA Region 1 (which includes the UK and Europe), has been cancelled due to a lack of industry support.

The three-day show, previously known as the CEDIA Expo, has been at its London ExCel centre home since 2006, and provides a UK showcase for the wares of the custom install and home automation industry, as well as training seminars for CI professionals.

Decision time

CEDIA Region 1's executive director Wendy Griffiths explains the decision to cancel the show which was due to be held at the end of May. 'We recognise that these are challenging times for the CI industry, alongside many other sectors of the economy. CEDIA has heavily subsidised the show since 2009 – in response to demands from the industry for a dedicated CI industry platform in the UK. Without the support of the majority of suppliers from within the sector, we have decided that it is not in the best interests of its stakeholders to host the show. With time running short, we have consulted with our organising partners for the



Wendy Griffiths: 'These are challenging times for the CI industry'

show, Upper Street Events, and, regrettably, have agreed to cancel the show for 2012.'

'Exhibitors have failed to sign up in sufficient numbers to make the event viable this year,' added Griffiths.

The good news for the CI world is that CEDIA will continue to 'serve the needs of the industry' through other events, including Integrated Systems Europe (ISE) and, interestingly, the Gadget Show Live.

The former is without doubt the European highlight for the install industry, and our impressions of this year's event (see our show report on page 18) are that it's getting bigger and better than ever. The same, in fairness, didn't apply to the Home Technology Event last year. Despite attendee numbers increasing, it was

obvious that the size of the show was on the wane.

The Gadget Show Live, meanwhile, will now feature a professional day on April 10.

And does the cancellation of this year's Home

Technology Event mean the pro-install business is in trouble? Not according to Griffiths. 'CEDIA Region 1 membership remains at an all time high and we are looking forward confidently to the rest of the year and beyond.'

Replaced: The Gadget Show Live (left) will feature a 'professional day' on April 10; will the 2011 Home Technology Event (above) be the last?



Talkback

Team *HCC* discusses the end of Sony's Passive resistance



I'm not completely surprised that Sony has begun making Passive 3D TVs.

The tech now has support from LG, Philips, Toshiba and Panasonic, making it much more widespread than it was a couple of years ago, and it would seem that LG has won the argument concerning consumer comfort versus loss of resolution. And Sony's much publicised financial problems means it's probably more open to new avenues. The bigger question for me is how much longer Samsung will hold out against the tide – or is LG's rival happy going out on a limb? **MC**



Like Sony, I'm more than a little surprised to see 3D ranking so poorly (18th out of 20!)

in the list of TV-buyers' priorities. I don't know how many people Sony's internal research surveyed, but if this result reflects a global trend then it would seem the 3DTV bubble has well and truly burst (if it had ever inflated). However, box office receipts show that there are still plenty of consumers prepared to pay a premium to see 3D films in cinemas, so it seems the job of manufacturers is to find another way of persuading them they can enjoy 3D in the home. And maybe Passive tech is the answer. **AVB**

Sony to embrace Passive 3D

Consumers get the benefits, says brand. First models to hit China

Sony is the latest, and arguably most significant, TV major to adopt Passive 3D tech. The move is part of a shake-up of its ailing TV business, which will see the adoption of several new display technologies plus deeper integration of 'net connected services.

The news was confirmed by Noriaki Negishi, Sony's new global head of TV. Speaking exclusively to *HCC* in Japan, Negishi said the roll-out of Passive would have to be managed carefully as the brand didn't want to hand a PR victory to rival LG. However, the development will be seen as a significant validation for the Korean panel-maker's 3D tech.

Sony launches its first Passive 3D TVs into the Chinese market this Spring and – although unconfirmed officially – *HCC* believes that the brand will then debut Passive models at IFA before a worldwide launch in 2013.

The 42in HX650 and 32in HX550 use FPR (Film Pattern Retarder) stereoscopic panels sourced from LG Display. They will sit alongside more expensive Active Shutter models in the brand's portfolio. This split range strategy is likely to be embraced when Sony launches Passive 3D worldwide.

Sony has been busy removing some of the barriers to Active, such as bulky glasses and crosstalk. It has developed new titanium 3D glasses that weigh just 30g. However, these remain very expensive.



Noriaki Negishi: 'Our engineers don't like it. But consumers appreciate the convenience of Passive 3D'

Selling high-price accessories for a technology met with large consumer indifference makes little sense for a business that has been losing money on TVs for eight years straight.

Internal research reveals that 3D remains a low priority for buyers, ranking 18th out of 20 reasons to purchase a new

set. Sony says it was shocked by the low ranking stereoscopy achieved in the survey.

Marching on with OLED

The adoption of Passive 3D TVs will also run alongside the introduction of OLED. The team responsible for Sony's 11in XEL-1 went on to create pro monitors. 'I've told the engineers I want them back working in the consumer group,' says Negishi-san. '2013 will be the year when we will really fight back with new technologies.'

Sony also has Crystal LED up its sleeve, but it has been tight-lipped about this new, self-emissive tech. Will it join Passive 3D and OLED in Sony's next-gen TV line-up? Only Noriaki Negishi knows for sure, and he's keeping quiet.

Crystal LED: Unveiled by Sony at CES



Disney classics



Walt Disney Studios has been teasing fans about which animated classics to expect on Blu-ray in

the US this year. The big surprise was the announcement of *Pocahontas*/*Pocahontas 2: Journey to a New World* and *The Rescuers/The Rescuers Down Under* double-packs for a Summer release. *The Aristocats* will follow on August 7 and the previously announced *Cinderella: Diamond Edition* debuts in October. The studio also confirmed that a Diamond Edition of *Aladdin* will get a Spring 2013 release. Fingers crossed the UK gets the same release schedule. www.disney.co.uk

'More brains...'



There's good news for fans of Dan O'Bannon's punk rock-infused 'splatterstick' horror

Return of the Living Dead – UK-based Indie label Second Sight is releasing the 1985 cult favourite as a Special Edition Blu-ray and DVD on April 9. And while it doesn't look like it has been able to license the commentary and other features from MGM's US release, Second Sight has created some new ones of its own in the form of interviews with novelist John Russo, plus the film's special effects artists and music consultant. www.secondsightfilms.co.uk

Silence is golden



Entertainment in Video has announced that it will be bringing *The Artist* to Blu-ray and DVD

in the UK on May 7. A homage to early Hollywood cinema, director Michael Hazanavicius' award-winning silent film has wowed critics and audiences alike and is sure to be one of 2012's bestselling titles.

While there's been no word on disc specifications, we at least hope for something similar to the two featurettes, filmmaker and cast Q&A and blooper reel that are promised for Sony's impending US release. www.entertainmentfilms.co.uk

Hitch is a Master



Alfred Hitchcock is joining the growing ranks of Eureka Entertainment's Masters of Cinema

Blu-ray range this Spring. The legendary filmmaker's 1944 thriller *Lifeboat* makes its BD debut on April 23, accompanied by HD presentations of his wartime short films *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure malgache*.

Other new Masters of Cinema releases on the way include Charles Laughton's *Island of Lost Souls* and *Ruggles of Red Gap* on May 28, followed by Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* and *The Long Weekend* on June 25. www.mastersofcinema.org

The art of murder

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo → Sony Pictures → All-region BD/R2 DVD

While Hollywood has a patchy history when it comes to remaking foreign films, it's hard not to get excited about David Fincher's take on *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Having already given us one of the decade's best crime thrillers in *Zodiac*, Fincher seems a perfect match for the material. And his passion for loading discs with special features means fans should have plenty of bonus goodies to look forward to when the film hits DVD and BD in the UK on April 23.



WorldMags.net

Mini theatre reimagined

Bowers & Wilkins MT-60D → www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk

The MT-60D is the latest addition to audio specialist Bowers & Wilkins' successful line-up of Mini Theatre systems.

This attractive new 5.1 speaker package will set you back around £1,950 and partners five upgraded M1s with the new and improved PVID 400W subwoofer. The result, so B&W claims, 'sets new standards for what can be expected from a compact, stylish speaker package'.

The M1 satellite speaker has been completely redesigned internally with all-new drive units, including a bass/mid-range driver that uses the Anti-Resonance Plug first utilised on the PM1 speaker. Meanwhile, the PVID features an OLED display and touch button array for easier setup.



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What Hi-Fi Ultimate Guide to Blu-Ray, November 2008



www.kef.com

The Wireless HTB2SE-W Subwoofer replaces the standard HTB2SE and now comes standard as part of the KHT3005SE 5.1 system.

In some cases where you may still want to use a cable, the HTB2SE-W Subwoofer can be hard wired too

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CUTTING TO THE CHASE



SP3 - The true audiophile surround processor

The Bryston SP3 surround processor is unique in that it represents a revolutionary approach to home theatre. Most surround processors are more like computers which process audio and video where features are more important than ultimate sonic performance. The SP3 is first and foremost an 'AUDIO' product. From our Class A discrete circuitry, separate analog and digital power supplies plus modular construction for easy updating, the SP3 simply extracts the audio portion of the signal from the HDMI inputs for processing while properly switching the video, routing it untouched to your display. The fast-paced world of video formats can change as they may, however the SP3 will remain a trusted long term solution for your multi-channel audio system.

With today's increased clarity and dynamic range in recordings and non-compressed movie sound-tracks (Dolby HD, DTS Master, etc), you need equipment that not only equals but surpasses the parameters of the most demanding material available. The SP3 surround processor is without equal in meeting this performance challenge.

Book a demonstration at your local Bryston retailer

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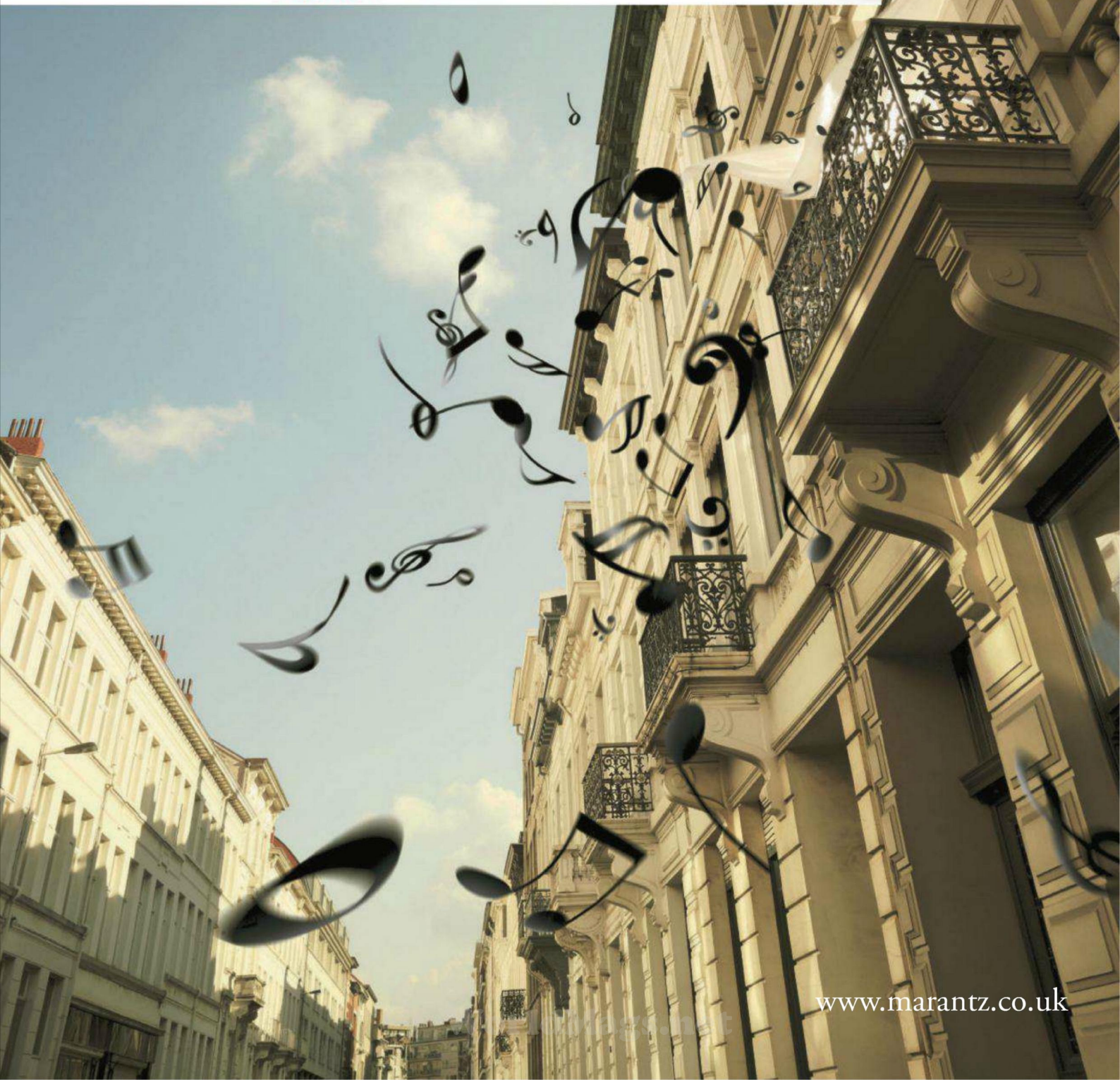
DON'T LOSE A NOTE OF THE ORIGINAL

With the UD7006 Blu-Ray Player

"The UD7006 is a master of all trades – including 3D"

The UD7006 is our very first 3D capable Blu-ray Disc player that combines HD surround sound with 3D picture. But not only that, it is also DLNA1.5-certified, which means it can stream audio and video stored on your home network. Also, to ensure top audio quality, it includes a special decoder for HD sound formats and uses a 32-bit audio DAC with 7.1 analogue channel out.

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision (July 2011)



This month's top 10 news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...



1 Panasonic ejects VCRs

The biggest shock this month comes from Panasonic, which has announced that it is finally stopping the manufacture of VCRs in Japan – the surprise being that it had still been making them. Anyway, before lovers of obsolete tech get too upset, the company also stated that it will continue making a limited number of VCR-based products at its China and Slovakia plants for export markets.

2 Disney sceptical about UV

Walt Disney Company CEO Bob Iger has told analysts that the studio is taking a 'wait and see' approach to the UltraViolet digital rights ecosystem, despite the fact that the studio is still working on developing a proprietary alternative system. While admitting that Disney was not opposed to joining the service, Iger stated that its launch hadn't proved 'as robust' or 'consumer friendly as we had hoped'.

3 LG 3D ads banned

The Advertising Standards Authority has told LG to withdraw some of its existing 3DTV adverts. The ASA claimed that the description of LG's Passive 3D TVs as 'Full HD 3D' was misleading and that the Korean manufacturer must 'make clear that it its product uses Passive 3D technology' on future ads. D'oh.

4 Record losses

Panasonic is predicting annual losses of 780-billion Yen (\$10.2-billion), the largest in the company's history. Declining sales, the Japanese earthquake and floods in Thailand are all being blamed for the forecast losses, with the company reporting a net loss of 197.6-billion Yen for the final three months of 2011.

5 Summit sold

It looks like Warner Bros. is taking a leaf out of Disney's book with the news that the studio will be putting a moratorium on *The Wizard of Oz* on Blu-ray and DVD latter this year – although our Hollywood moles indicate that it will be re-released with new digital transfers in time for the film's 75th anniversary in 2014.

6 From game boss to CEO

Sony has announced that Kazuo Hirai has been appointed President and CEO of the company, replacing Sir Howard Stringer from April 1. Hirai joined the company in 1995 and

was instrumental in overseeing the launch of PlayStation 2's online gaming service and, more recently, the PlayStation Network.

7 Onkyo stays top

Onkyo has retained its title as the UK's bestselling home cinema receiver brand for a fourth consecutive year. Five of 2011's top-selling home cinema AVRs were made by Onkyo, with the TX-NR609 taking the top spot, followed in second by the TX-NR608. And while overall sales were down in the sector, Onkyo's brand share (by unit sales) rose from 30.9 per cent in 2010 to 34.5 per cent last year.

8 Virgin closer to milestone

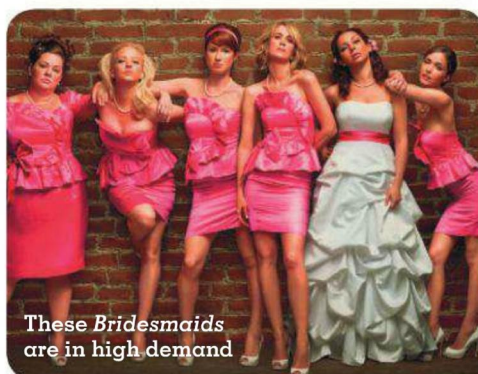
Virgin Media has revealed that its flagship TiVo service has now clocked up an impressive 435,000 subscribers, edging it ever closer to the landmark figure of half-a-million users. In related news, the company also revealed that its customers watched a combined total of 490million hours of On Demand content in 2011!

9 Amazon beats HMV

The past month has seen yet more bad news for beleaguered retailer HMV. According to research by Kanter Worldpanel, Amazon has now overtaken HMV to become the UK's leading entertainment retailer with 22 per cent of the market compared to the former's 17.5 per cent. Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's followed in third, four and fifth place respectively.

10 To have and to hold

Universal has announced that its comedy smash hit *Bridesmaids* has become the most-ordered Video On Demand release to date. According to the latest industry figures, the film was ordered more than 4.8million times during its first four months on release – grossing more than \$24million on VOD, plus another \$16million through other digital platforms including internet VOD, pay-per-view and hotel viewings.



These *Bridesmaids* are in high demand

Premiere

HCC's guide to what's happening in the world of TV and films...

Dead again

After years in the wilderness, the *Evil Dead* remake is finally happening. Currently shooting in New Zealand, the film is directed by newcomer Fede Alvarez from a script rewritten by Diablo Cody, and stars Jane Levy and Shiloh Fernandez.

Doctor denied



Drive director Nicolas Winding Refn was turned down by the BBC for a directing spot on its premier sci-fi series. 'I would have loved to direct *Doctor Who*, but they didn't want me – they turned me down last year', claimed the award-winning filmmaker in a recent interview.

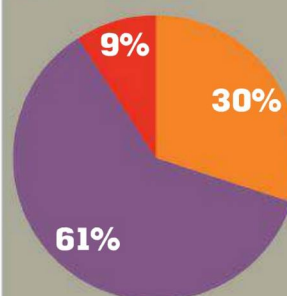
Urban justice

Director Joe 'The A-Team' Carnahan has revealed that his next project will be a new adaptation of *Death Wish*. Writing on Twitter, Carnahan stated his version will be a 're-imagining of the book set in present day LA'.

We asked...

Which is the more exciting next-gen TV technology – OLED or 4K?

- OLED
- 4K
- Neither

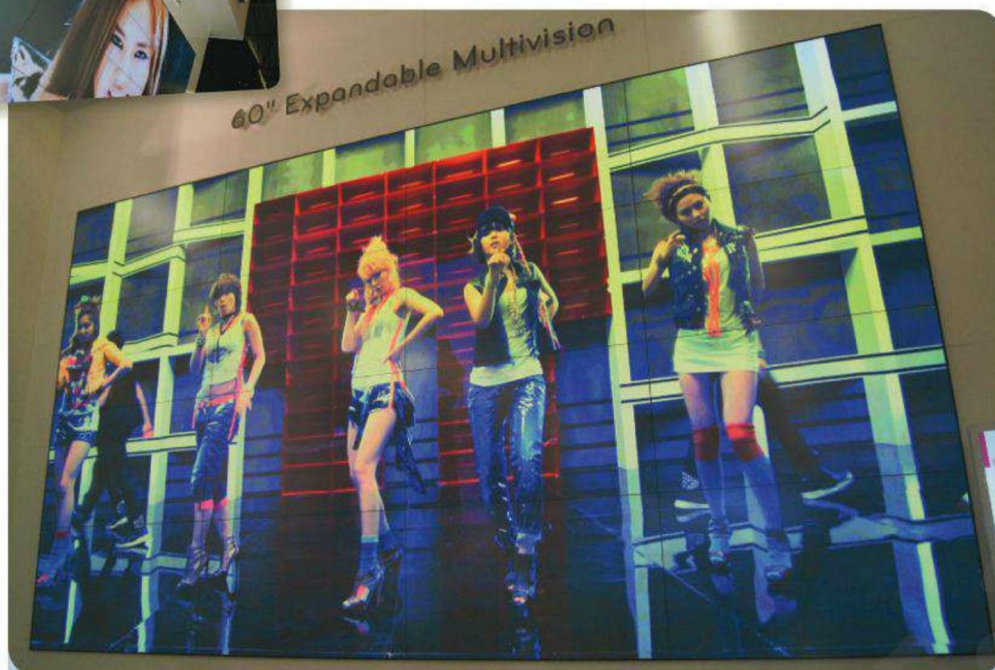


Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

SHOW

The annual Integrated Systems Europe show reveals what's next in custom install and Pro AV – and ultra high-def 4k resolution displays, interactive touchscreen panels and transparent LCDs were all the rage. Naturally, **Team HCC** was in attendance, dragging its jaw around the floor. What blew our mind? Read on...





LG 60in Expandable Multivision

It's not often you hear LG extolling the virtues of plasma, but that's exactly what the brand was doing to promote its 60in Expandable Multivision system. Only plasma, it declared, could offer the depth of colour and off-angle viewing clarity required for super-large displays.

Its Multivision 60in video wall panels have a bezel just 1.4mm wide, making the joins virtually disappear when they're bolted together to form a high-tech video wall. And the displays claim

a super-fast response time of 0.001ms for zero motion blur.

Interesting, these PDPs also feature Image Sticking Compensation (ISC) to eliminate the possibility of screenburn caused by static commercial content. The Multivision display stores the brightness value of every pixel, and when image retention is registered, the panel automatically boosts pixel brightness to compensate.



Speakercraft Seamless Invisible Speakers

The big thing in discrete home audio is no longer in-wall speakers, it's invisible speakers! Speakercraft used ISE to introduce a new range called Seamless, which on this evidence sound astonishing.

The units are recessed in the wall and can be skimmed over with regular multi-finish plaster, paint or wallpaper. The speakers employ the brand's proprietary Live Wall technology to deliver a wide soundstage with a decent frequency range, quoted from 60Hz to 22KHz. Going a little deeper is the in-wall subwoofer; unlike the main units this can only be plastered around its edge – however the sub's surface can be painted, which in the hands of a skilled craftsman makes it all but undetectable.

Seamless strikes us as a compelling proposition.



D-Box 3D driving simulator

D-Box has a reputation for bringing shake, rattle and roll to home theater, courtesy of motion actuator chairs driven by codes encoded in Blu-rays. However, at ISE it unveiled a multiscreen 3D gaming pod that really took you for a ride. With pitch and yaw motors, a trio of screens and surround sound audio, it offers by far the most convincing racing experience outside an F1 simulator. The home theme park revolution begins here?



Velodyne Wi-Connect

Sometimes the handiest things come in small packages. The Wi-Connect from the bass barons at Velodyne is a wireless audio transmitter/receiver combo that can be used to feed a subwoofer without the need to run physical cables from your AV receiver. Set up is simple: the transmitter connects to the LFE output of your AVR, while the receiver connects to the LFE input of your subwoofer. Signals are sent between the two over the 2.4GHz band, with a range upwards of 15m. Velodyne claims no drop in quality compared to a wired system, making this a neat solution for those with hardwood floors. The system sells for just £225.

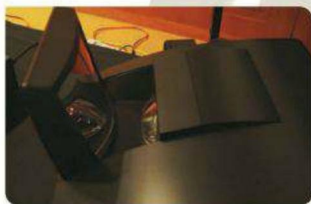
Vinyl I Translook transparent LCD

Transparency was a reoccurring theme at this year's show. LG, Samsung, Philips and others all touted transparent technology. The idea is that you can look at goods while being blitzed with information about them.

By far the most imaginative example of this came from Korean brand Vinyl I, which unveiled the Translook interactive display. It fitted a 55in transparent screen into the door of a refrigerator. The door then appears to fill with ice before soda pours in. The panel uses LED edge lighting on all four sides and offers Full HD graphics. Integrated 40W speakers add to the illusion.

The brand says Translook can be used to display everything from luxury goods and beverages to museum pieces. In the sci-fi shopping centre of tomorrow, we expect to see this tech everywhere – and wonder what its home cinema application could be...





Runco LS-100d ultra-short throw PJ

Claiming to 'boldly go where no projector has ever gone' Runco's LS-100d is designed for those who want big HD images but don't have room for a traditional projector. Thanks to proprietary NEAR wizardry, it's capable of crafting a 92in picture from a distance of just 18in. Other vital statistics include compatibility with 1080p24 material and the use of low-power LED tech. The price, currently listed only in dollars, is \$20,000.



Tutondo USB in-wall control plug

Hankering after a multiroom audio system? What could be simpler than Tutondo's USB wall socket? Just jack your MP3-packed stick straight into the wall, hit play and party. This USB player is just one of a range of in-wall units from the Italian brand. Others come with OLED displays for source selection, volume and track control. All fit into a standard electrical back box and come in white, black or chrome face plates.



Flatfrog Multitouch 3200

There was no shortage of touchscreens, large and small, at ISE. But the most tactile of all came from Flatfrog. The brand demonstrated a 32in panel, in a table configuration, that uses Planar Scatter Detection (PSD) to create a ridiculously responsive and versatile interface. The Multitouch 3200 provides the silky smoothness of a capacitive screen, but can be used by digits clothed in gloves, plastic or rubber, as well as naked flesh. Up to 40 simultaneous touch points can be detected, with the screen able to track movements as small as 1/16mm of a millimeter. The company expects the system to be used by creative agencies, photographers, publishers and the commercial leisure trade.



Kaleidescape M700 Disc Vault

New from the movie server maestros at Kaleidescape is the M700 Disc Vault. This automated 'load and copy' system stores up to 320 discs, from Blu-rays to CDs. Once locked in the Vault's carousel, discs are ripped onto a Kaleidescape server, from where they can be streamed to any client device. The user interface is a gorgeous mosaic of selectable album art.

Got a massive movie collection? No problem. Multiple M700s can be daisy-chained together. But given each M700 Disc Vault sells for £6,000, you might want to invite your bank manager along for a *LOTR* marathon. Oh yeah, and when you add a server, the cost doubles.



Panasonic 152in 4K touchscreen plasma

A 152in plasma is, by any definition, eye-catching. But give it 4K resolution and a touch interface and you've really got us hooked. This eye-popper utilises a U-Touch interactive interface (actually a bezel which maps the screen with an IR grid), allowing you to take control of your content in a way a standard remote doesn't.

The screen at ISE was running native 4K content sourced from 360° Cities. The result was an interactive panorama of London. From a fixed camera point you could pan around and pinch-zoom deeper and deeper into the image – with no loss of detail. Simply mesmerizing!



Bowers & Wilkins CI 300 in-wall speakers

Bowers & Wilkins took the wraps off a range of custom installation loudspeakers at ISE. While most architectural speakers look much the same, its new CI 300 models have been designed to work in areas of high humidity. Just the ticket for that sound system around the pool or your new wet room. The CI 300's hail from the same team behind the brand's well-regarded CI600 and 700 models, so there should be no compromise on sound quality when they get Wet Wet Wet.

DENON

No limits, no rules Free your media!

100
YEARS
DENON
1918-2018



CEOL. Network Music System. A new way to enjoy your music: Introducing the all new Denon CEOL. This new generation music system gives you the freedom to enjoy Original Denon Sound. From almost all of today's available music sources. Just like any Denon, it delivers sound exactly the way the artists intended it. Ask the Swedish Guitar Heroes from Royal Republic, for instance. They just can't keep their ears off of it. Ever since they have discovered the remote App to control the CEOL from their iPhones, they can't keep their hands away either!



Feel free to wow your ears: The powerful amplifier delivers crystal clear sound to the stylish loudspeakers.



Network



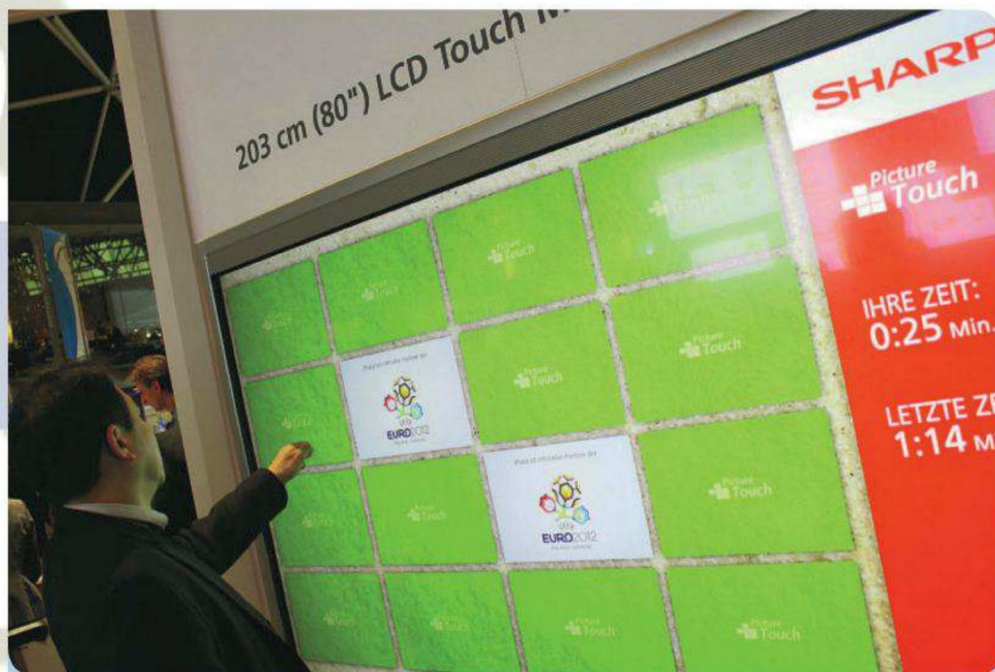
Discover CEOL - The Freedom of Sound: www.ceolbydenon.eu // Additional information on the AirPlay upgrade available under www.denon.eu/airplay/en
Denon is a trademark or registered trademark of D&M Holdings, Inc..



Dimenco Autostereoscopic 3D

While there were plenty of 3D technologies on display at ISE, autostereoscopic glasses-free 3D screens were notable mainly by their absence. Dimenco Displays did, however, fly the flag with 42in and 55in LCDs, plus a 23in monitor.

Dimenco rose from the ashes of Philips' abandoned auto-3D R&D program, and the company recently teamed with Red Bull to produce a 3D ad. To test its effectiveness, an in-store sales unit was installed at three Dutch petrol stations. One station had a plain beverage holder, the second had the dispenser plus the ad running on a 2D monitor, the third combined the dispenser with the ad delivered on an auto-3D display. Eye-tracking software was used to measure the exact viewing time of consumers at each outlet – unsurprisingly, the 3D installation generated 45 per cent more eyeball time.



Sharp PN-L Aquos Board

Part 80in Full HD LCD display, part interactive white board – Sharp's new Aquos Board takes bigscreen touchpanels to a new level. The PN-L range, which is also available in 60in and 70in screen sizes, is networkable and sports an advanced IR detection system supporting dual touch input and both pen- and finger-written notes. You can scroll intuitively through content by brushing two fingers up and down the screen, and zoom in and out by spreading or pinching fingers.

The brand says the Board is ideal for next-generation videoconferencing, education and corporate presentations. Once you've brainstormed, everything can be saved or printed.

The tactile panel uses the Japanese giant's next-gen UV2A technology for crisp blacks and vibrant colours. The two largest models make use of a Full LED backlight array, rather than edge-lighting, for better uniformity and contrast.



Opus 6 Series multiroom system

Opus updated its highly versatile 6 Series multiroom entertainment system at ISE with iPod/iPad and internet radio/audio streamer plug-in modules. Consequently, the system can now play content from your iOS gadget, stream from any networked NAS or uPnP device, as well as access 'net radio, BBC iPlayer and weather information. This is Smart smarthome tech.

File support includes MP3, AAC, WAV and FLAC, while navigation is via dedicated touchscreens or any network connected TV.



Screen Excellence Absolute curved screen

If you're looking for a truly cinematic experience, then a curved projection screen is the way to go – and if you can make it suitable for 4K projectors, all the better. Enter the ISF-certified Absolute from Screen Excellence. Offering curved lateral masks and a memory capable of storing 99 different widths, it can cope with any aspect ratio you care to think of.

The Absolute is available in sizes between 80in and 160in, with prices starting at £12K. Don't forget you'll also need a video processor able to warp the image to fit the curvature exactly.



Steinway Lyngdorf S-Series speakers

We've seen and heard Steinway Lyngdorf's glorious ultra high-end Model D array, so the chance to grab an earful of its new, more affordable in-wall/on-wall S-Series was not to be missed.

The series consists of three options – the on-wall S-15, the in-wall S-15IW and the S-16IW in-wall and in-ceiling speaker. Bass duties are handled by the 'on-floor' S-210 boundary woofer.

A seven-channel demo of the S Series, using the brand's RoomPerfect-equipped digital sound processors, left us in no doubt of its sonic prowess. Installers take note... ●

Play it your way

Pioneer has developed a revolutionary new speaker system. This system features HVT technology to produce immersing sound in a full and unique 360° soundscape.



HTP-SLH500

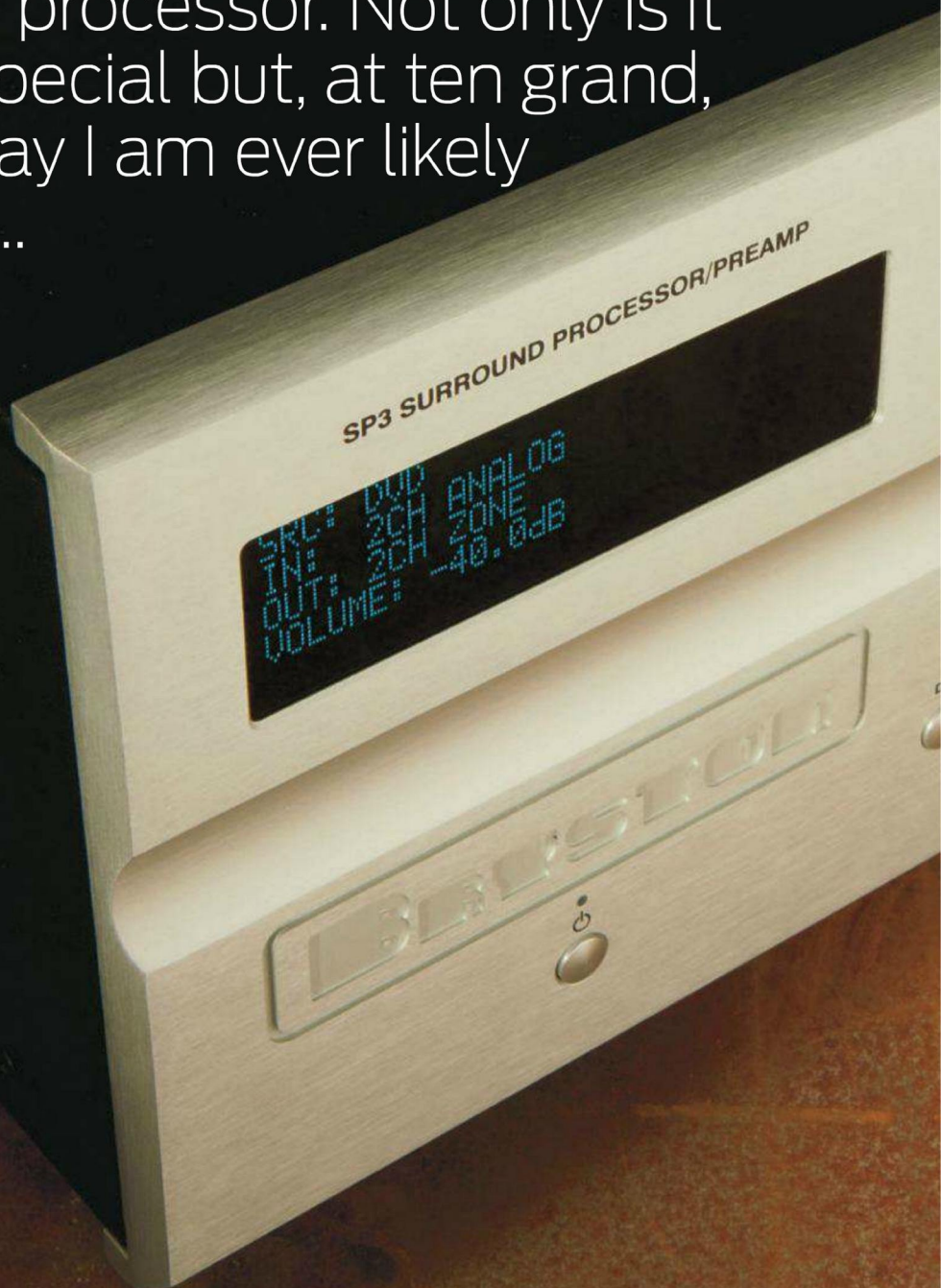
The superslim and stylish HTP-SLH500 home theatre package includes the S-HV500 'Sound Wing' satellite speakers, along with the VSX-S300 slim AV receiver and S-SWL500 slim subwoofer.

Pioneer

www.pioneer.co.uk

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If I was able to trade body parts for AV goodies I would already be the Black Knight from Monty Python's Holy Grail. But whilst I rolled around limbless on the floor I wouldn't think twice about proffering a major organ for Bryston's SP3 processor. Not only is it really rather special but, at ten grand, it's the only way I am ever likely to afford one....



Richard Stevenson
has been writing about
consumer electronics
for more than a decade
and is renowned for his
extensive knowledge of
AV receivers, power
amps and processors





Match Bryston's SP3 with
a multichannel amplifier
and you're in business

You see, Bryston has brought a rather different philosophy to the heady world of high-end home cinema equipment. Unlike other processors in the same wallet-wrenching ball park, such as Anthem's DV2 or Denon's AVP-A1HD, the SP3 is a minimalist design. It eschews the relentless feature-fest – and even quite basic functionality – of its competitors in its single-minded pursuit of the purist sound quality. Those very ideals have seen this Canadian AV company thrive at the serious end of the global hi-fi industry for over 35 years.

Splitter

Bryston's SP3 aims to take in an HDMI signal and split out the LPCM or bitstream audio component. The video part of the HDMI passes clean through the SP3, unmolested, and on to the HDMI outputs. So there is

no upscaling, no legacy analogue video-to-HDMI conversion, no colour, brightness or gamma processing – not even an onscreen menu display or GUI. Nothing. By implementing straight in/straight out video, Bryston has eliminated the need for high-speed video processing engines altogether. This stops any possible contamination of the audio signal and frees up R&D dollars for even more esoteric audio components.

I will admit that for many this could sound bonkers. The SP3 is a ten-thousand pound AV processor that doesn't actually process the V bit. But it does make some sense, because if you are spending this sort of moolah on a processor then you are almost certainly spending a whole lot of cash on the very best video source equipment available, making any further image-fettling superfluous at best. >



The audio portion of the SP3 is a very similar story of straight paths and minimal twiddling or tweaking. The digital stream is taken from the HDMI source (or S/PDIF from the coaxial and optical audio jacks), decoded and sent to the audiophile analogue output stages in the cleanest, most direct manner Bryston has found possible. This process is where Bryston's audiophile heritage comes into its own as each of the seven output stages are

Miller time:
Bryston's
milled
aluminium
fascia oozes
class

designed as individual class-A pre-amplifier stages. The only user-adjustable sound parameters are channel delay, channel balance, bass management, lip-sync and overall volume. There is no Room EQ, no THX post-processing enhancements, no virtual speakers and no height or width channels. And as for features like networking, iPod docking or App control? Certainly not. Different, isn't it?

The front panel is not the usual fair either. It is a huge slab of milled aluminium with a Bryston logo machined out, a four-line dot matrix display and an array of small chrome buttons. The remote control is just wild. It is machined out of a solid lump of aluminium so has a super heavyweight feel in the hand. The buttons click with a real mechanical integrity and sense of purpose. Annoyingly, though, it's not backlit – and you might expect that sort of finishing touch at this price.

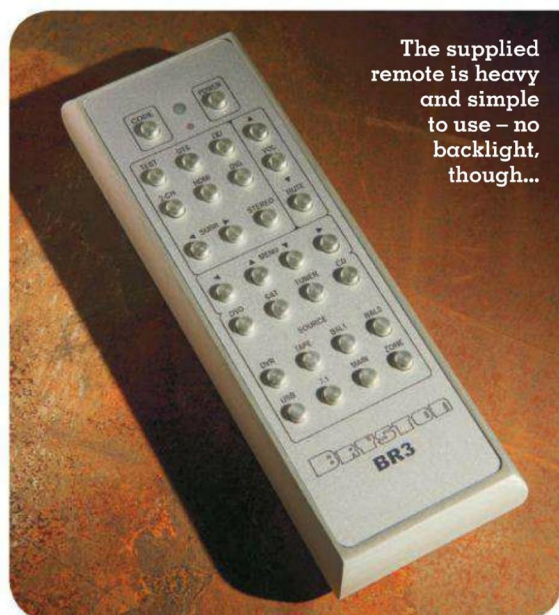
Rear-entry

While all this sleek and minimalist style is an acquired taste, which I haven't acquired, the rear panel is pure audiophile heaven. In addition to the 8-in/2-out HDMI's, the main analogue audio connections are all fully-balanced XLR terminals. There is also a wide array of phono

line-level inputs and outputs, the aforementioned digital audio inputs and even a pair of AES/EBU digital inputs. As at least a nod to installation flexibility, there is a raft of 12V triggers and RS232 and Ethernet ports, although both of the latter are purely for CI control.

Under the sumptuous hood the design is no less different. The massive double-decker construction utilises completely separate power supplies for the digital processing and the analogue output stages. Not only does this over-engineered solution ensure signal integrity in both camps and negligible cross-talk between the two, it means that an analogue input signal can completely bypass the DSP stages. Feed it a stereo signal from a quality CD player or the analogue multichannel outputs of a top-spec Blu-ray spinner, and you get the same sort of signal purity out the other end as one would expect from a high-end stereo pre-amp. Now, to most home cinema aficionados that might seem a little excessive, but if you want the best in two-channel music reproduction and top-spec digital processing from a single device, the SP3 ticks all the boxes.

Interestingly, one of Bryston's other claims to the SP3's fame is its simplicity of use. Now I must have



The supplied
remote is heavy
and simple
to use – no
backlight,
though...

missed that one, because the set-up is a bit of a challenge. For starters, other than the nearly-as-bonkers T+A K8 reviewed in the last issue, I can't remember the last AV processor, amp or receiver that I had to set up manually or without an onscreen display. You need to be pretty close to the green fascia display to read the small menus, which is not a problem for settings such as speaker distances but becomes a challenge where relative volume levels are concerned. You have to sit in your prime seat, listening or measuring the pink noise test tone, and reading 8mm tall text from across the room. Not possible with my old eyes, that's for sure. Then again, some things are simple by featureless default. You don't have to assign HDMI connections because the input numbers 1-8 represent the eight sources in that

order on the front panel. Simple as that, in theory at least.

Okay, probably due to my intimate familiarity with highly automated and complex processors, I found using the SP3 something of a bugger to get used to. In one example of many, I spent ages trying to get the SP3 into

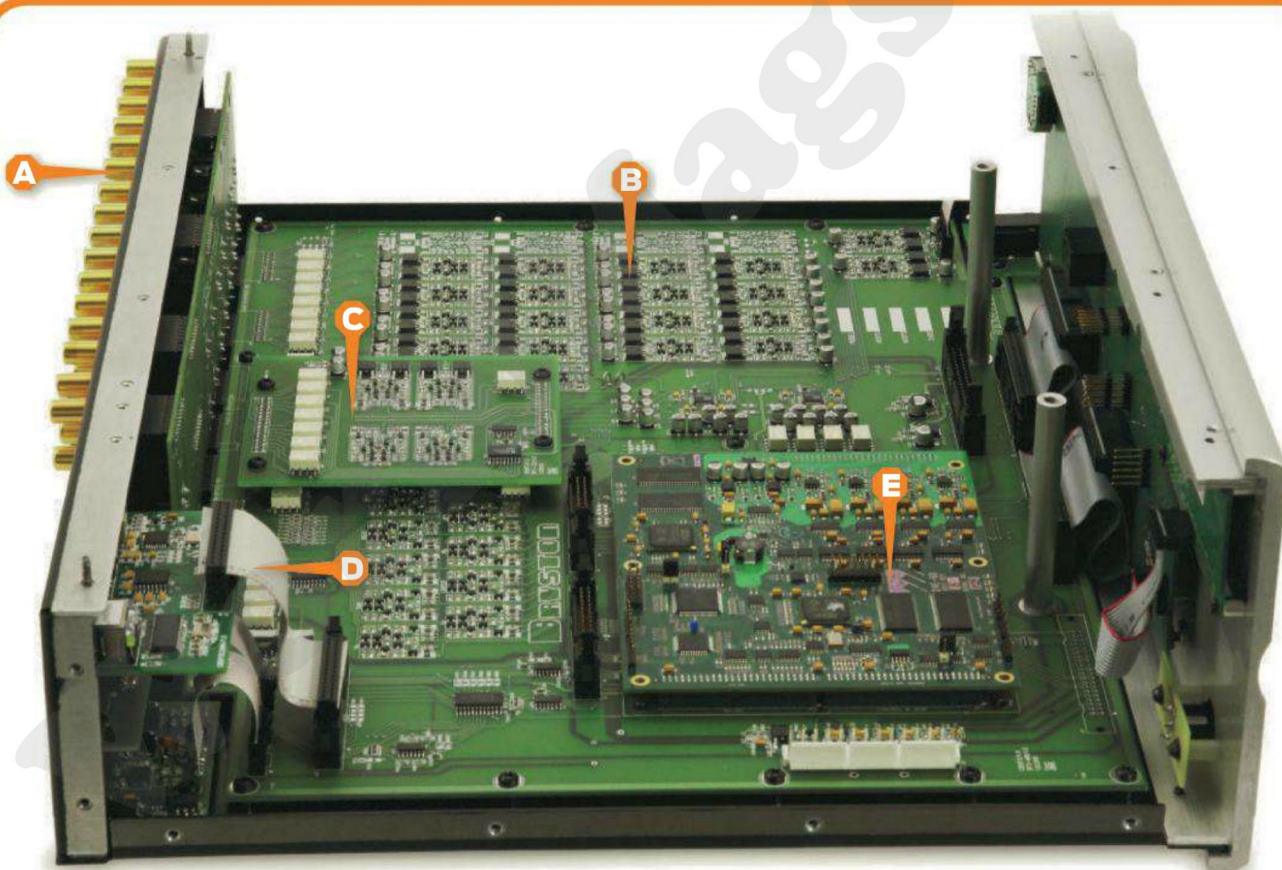
'If you want the best in music reproduction and digital processing, the Bryston ticks all the boxes'

multichannel mode as it would only output Blu-ray sound downmixed to stereo. As there is no 'multichannel' or 'direct' button on the remote or fascia, it transpires that you enable multichannel sound by pressing the 'stereo' button – to disable stereo mode. Go figure. And if that was in

the manual, damned if I could find it. Ah, it's just that sort of slightly frustrating quirkiness that makes the high-end of hi-fi such a fun place to be. I'm told.

Stereo stunner

I borrowed a matching Bryston 9B five-channel power amp (£9,000) from UK distributor PMC for this test, and stuck on a CD while choosing some Blu-rays, just to warm things up. It took barely a few seconds before I had to stop faffing about and listen properly to the Bryston's stereo performance. Laura Marling's voice was right there in the room with me, presented in fantastic detail with presence that only a handful of amplifiers have ever delivered. And not one of those was an AV amplifier, they were all high-end two-channel designs. My own reference processor is the Denon



Getting its top off: Upper layer removed to reveal lower boards

A Connections

Rearside ports include balanced XLR terminals and unbalanced phono inputs for stereo, plus 8-in/2-out HDMI

B Analogue output stage

This is built using discrete Class-A op-amps rather than inferior-sounding integrated circuits

C Multizone output

A dedicated second zone audio output board ensures high-end stereo in another room, too

D System control board

Ethernet and USB interfaces for system integration rather than network features

E DSP Engine

The digital processor circuit board turns bitstream, S/PDIF and LPCM into high-quality analogue sound. Modular construction allows for future upgrades when other sound formats come along



'With the 8-in/2-out HDMI's and fully-balanced XLR terminals, the rear panel is pure home cinema heaven'

AVP-A1HD (£7,500) and frankly the Bryston is in a different league with pure music.

The sound is deliciously inviting, each note crafted with such airiness and precision it is breathtaking. Bass has startlingly dynamic power and depth but it is at once spectacularly detailed and rich with texture. Comparatively, the Denon sounds rather thicker and artificially weighty, while the Anthem DV2 is equally detailed yet lacks that very last breath of space between instruments that the SP3 delivers with consummate ease. It is a jaw dropper and hands down the best AV processor I have ever heard with stereo music.

Better still, much of that precision, power and sheer clarity translates directly into fantastic multichannel surround sound. Dialogue is crisp and enthralling with fabulous tone and depth. Through *Kung Fu Panda* each character is all but etched into the room. Jack Black, Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie and Ian McShane sound, well, just like themselves with crystal-clear expression and timbre. Each voice is thrust into the room with three-dimensional body and the fine detailing never exhibits even a hint of artificial sibilance. This makes for an incredibly captivating movie-watching experience that absolutely delivers on the SP3's promise of true high-end sound.

Wot, no EQ?

Perhaps even more impressive is how Bryston's processor sounds when the action really gets underway. As Tai Lung escapes from prison, the soundmix delivers a full-bore all-channel fiesta of effects. Unchecked by EQ, this scene often gets my room so excited that details get masked and various console controllers fall off the shelves. Yet even without the aid of EQ, the SP3 sounds amazingly taut under pressure, crafting a huge action sequence with admirable control. Each explosion has fast-paced dynamic attack backed with bone-shaking power. High-frequency effects leap clear of the chaos to ensure your hear absolutely everything coming off the disc.

By comparison, most AV receivers, even those costing up to £2,000 or so, sound congested, confused and muddled.

I switched between genres of movie and found that the SP3's performance remained stellar throughout. Its sheer pace and clarity

are breathtaking. Only Anthem's DV2 has come close to creating such a stunningly incisive and open sound in my room and that beast achieves its performance in a very different way – by applying oodles of very accurate high-speed digital EQ. The result is that the Anthem sounds even tighter and more dramatic – but doesn't match the SP3's stunning lucidity that separates every spoken word, effect and ambient detail with incredible space.

Clearly the SP3 is unfettered by any malaise caused by having loads of spurious RF from the video processing under the same bonnet. This allows the whole movie's soundstage to soar into the room. Characters sound like they are there with you, effects sound like real events rather than a digital audio mock-up of what you are seeing on screen, and soundtracks have a definitive live presence. As such, the SP3 captures 'mood' with a rare sensitivity, irrespective of whether the film is an intense drama or Pixar family fun. It delivers all the angst and passion of Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* like no other AV kit I have tried; as each scene unfolds you are drawn deeper into the plot, wholly affected by the emotions of the characters. Inspiring stuff.

Purist processor

But there is a downside to the Bryston SP3, and not just the eye-watering price ticket. This processor is a purist device and its lack of features and quirky operation isn't for everyone. Niceties that most of us take for granted on even budget receivers, like ease of operation and clearly understood GUIs, are missing. And more advanced functionality such as networking, streaming, height/width channel processing and HDMI ARC are never going to be part of this processor irrespective of future manufacturer upgrades. The lack of EQ may also cause unacceptable issues in some rooms – it did lead to some of my cinema's nodes getting a little excited but they never became obtrusive – and a Bryston buyer is likely to be in the market for acoustic treatment, too.

However, I personally would accept these frustrations in return for the SP3's incredible clarity every day. Rarely have I been so gutted to disconnect a review sample and hand it back. Bryston's SP3 is odd, expensive, operationally frustrating and utterly, utterly brilliant ●

→Analysis

GUI: Erm, there isn't one – unless you count the dot matrix display in the front fascia

Power consumption: We measured an average consumption of 50W, with a peak of 55W

Killer feature: The remarkable audio performance – partly because there are few other features of note...

→Specifications

Dolby TrueHD: YES and Dolby Digital Plus

DTS-HD Master Audio: YES and DTS Neo:6

THX: NO

Multichannel input: YES 7.1 channel

Multichannel output: YES 7.1 channel phono & XLR

Multi-room: YES one extra zone (audio)

AV inputs: YES 4 x coaxial and 3 x optical digital audio

HDMI: YES 8-in 2-out

Video upscaling: NO

Component video: NO

Dimensions: 440(w) x 393(d) x 160(h) mm

Weight: 11kg

Features: Audiophile quality construction and components; fully balanced audio; 12V triggers; Dolby Volume; RS232 CI control; digital-bypass pure analogue circuits; milled aluminium remote; factory 100-hour run-in; five-year guarantee.



HCC VERDICT

Bryston SP3 → £10,000 Approx

→ Supplier: www.bryston.co.uk

→ Tel: 0870 4441044

Highs: Stunning, class-defining stereo and movie sound; reassuring design and build quality

Lows: No features (pretty much at all); high price

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

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REVEALED

The movie

With a new version of *Straw Dogs* out on Blu-ray, **Team HCC** delivers its

remakes that

definitive list of the remakes that, against all odds, are actually quite good...

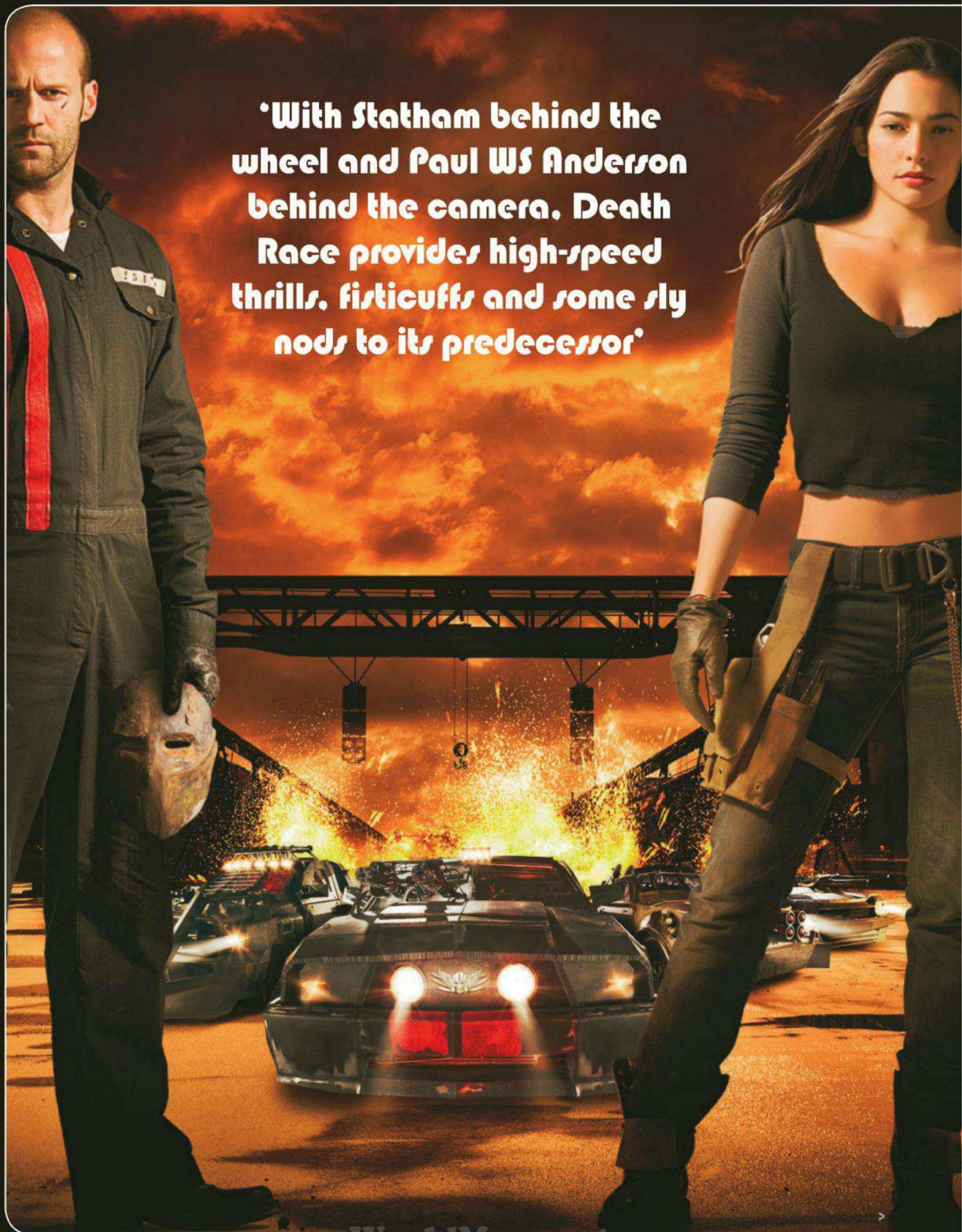
don't suck!



CANDYMAN
Johnny Depp
takes over as
Willy Wonka

WorldMags.net

‘With Statham behind the wheel and Paul WS Anderson behind the camera, Death Race provides high-speed thrills, fistcuffs and some sly nods to its predecessor’



WorldMags.net

13 Assassins

Remake of: Jûsan-nin no shikaku

Remaking classic movies isn't solely the preserve of Hollywood – as this Japanese gem shows.

Eiichi Kudo's 1963 samurai film was given a high-profile update in 2010 by controversial filmmaker Takashi Miike. What emerged was one of the director's most accomplished works – an epic tale that recalls the best of Kurosawa before bowing out with a breathtaking 45-minute punch-up. Artificial Eye's UK BD does the film proud with a fabulously cinematic AVC 1.85:1 encode and dynamic DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack. And, while it only includes the shorter International Cut of the film, the disc does serve up the missing 24 minutes of footage as deleted scenes.

The monochrome original is currently unavailable on BD in the UK – or anywhere else come to that

An Affair to Remember

Remake of: Love Affair

Regularly cited as one of the most romantic movies ever made, this 1957 smash starring Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr could be seen as the Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* of its day. While not done shot-for-shot, director Leo McCarey used the same screenplay that was penned for the 1939 film *Love Affair*. A subsequent remake, returning to the original title and starring Warren Beatty and Annette Benning, followed in 1994.

While opinion is split over which is the better out of the '39 and '57 versions (Grant himself favoured the original), it's impossible not to fall under the spell of the latter – especially now that Fox has made it available on a feature-packed, bargain-priced Blu-ray with a superb transfer. *Love Affair* is currently unavailable on Blu-ray and may never be – it fell into the public domain in the US in 1967 when its copyright wasn't renewed

Ben-Hur [1959]

Remake of: Ben-Hur [1925]

Published in 1880, Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* quickly became the best-selling American novel of all time until *Gone with the Wind* arrived in 1936. So it's hardly surprising that Hollywood has returned to the story numerous times over the years. Ignoring a 15-minute 1907 effort, the first serious adaptation came in 1925 (the most expensive silent movie ever made at almost \$4million). However, it's the 1959 version starring Charlton Heston that has gone on to become the king of the Hollywood epics. Last year this led to the film getting the royal treatment it deserved with a meticulously restored three-disc Blu-ray edition.

A standard-def version of the original is included as an extra on the Ultimate Collector's Edition Blu-ray of the '59 remake

Cape Fear [1991]

Remake of: Cape Fear [1962]

Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro followed their *Goodfellas* collaboration with their own spin

on J. Lee Thompson's lawyer-in-peril thriller. De Niro absolutely steals the show as psycho trailer-trash rapist Max Cady – the sight of him dressed up as a woman is enough to give the *HCC* team nightmares – while Scorsese proves his mettle in genre cinema.

Cape Fear also marks the director's first movie shot at a 2.35:1 ratio, and Universal's recent BD release does it justice – although the studio once again has felt the urge to apply Digital Noise Reduction, which isn't ideal.

The original 1962 version is available on BD in the UK from Universal, priced around £10

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Remake of: Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

Tim Burton enjoyed more success with this 2005 remake than his ill-fated *Planet of the Apes* (see boxout, p36), bringing in regular partner Johnny Depp to star as Roald Dahl's oddball confectioner Willy Wonka. It's more than a match for the 1971 iteration, with Burton making use of modern-day CGI to give life to Dahl's unique vision – casting the diminutive actor Deep Roy as all 165 Oompa Loompas is a stroke of genius. And, let's be honest, Depp's version of Wonka is slightly less terrifying than Gene Wilder's. Warner's UK Blu-ray is a garish, ghoulish treat.

You can get the original on BD in the UK from Warner Home Video – but you may want to import the region-free Ultimate Collector's Edition

Dawn of the Dead [2004]

Remake of: Dawn of the Dead [1978]

While people have tried, and failed, to successfully remake George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, Zack Snyder's decision to revisit the sequel pays off handsomely in this 2004 horror. Key to its success is Snyder's insistence that zombies don't have to shuffle about laboriously – here, the undead rampage at breakneck speed, and are all the more terrifying for it. Sure, it lacks some of the subtleties of Romero's flick, but offers more than enough blood, guts and guns to keep any zombieophile happy, and Universal's DTS-HD mix (on the region-free US BD) ensures the flesh-eaters' spine-tingling snarls are never too far away. *Arrow Video's BD edition of the original – complete with Dario Argento's edit – is a must-own disc, too*

Death Race

Remake of: Death Race 2000

The original '70s exploitation flick starring David Carradine and Sylvester Stallone has rightly acquired a cult following, but it's not so much of a sacred cow that a remake isn't welcome – particularly when it's delivered as effectively as it is here. Yes, the races have been moved from the US highways to a money-hungry prison, and pedestrians are no longer part of the scoring system, but with the reliable Jason Statham behind the wheel – and Paul WS Anderson >



Top-to-bottom: The remakes of *13 Assassins*, *Cape Fear* and *Dawn of the Dead* all brought new audiences to old classics



BEN x3
The 1959 telling of *Ben-Hur* was Hollywood's third stab

behind the camera – *Death Race* provides high-speed thrills, fisticuffs and some sly nods to its predecessor. On Blu-ray it benefits from a riotous DTS-HD mix and a solid transfer. *There's no hi-def UK release yet of Death Race 2000 yet. The US disc is Region A locked*

The Departed

Remake of: *Infernal Affairs*

Another entry for Martin Scorsese, this Oscar-winning crime thriller takes the basic premise of the Hong Kong hit *Infernal Affairs* (an undercover cop faces off against an undercover gangster) and dumps it in the middle of Boston, allowing Scorsese to also tell the story of the city's Irish Mob and feared boss 'Whitey' Bulger (here renamed Frank Costello, and played by Jack Nicholson). In that regard this is more than a mere retread, and the ensemble cast (including Matt Damon, Mark Wahlberg and Alec Baldwin) are on top-form. Violent, nail-biting, tightly-scripted and served up on BD with an excellent TrueHD 5.1 mix. *Is the original available? Yes, on Region B Blu-ray from Tartan. You can also get the complete trilogy*

A Fistful of Dollars

Remake of: *Yojimbo*

It took only three years for Sergio Leone and Clint Eastwood to get their remake of Akira Kurosawa's samurai classic *Yojimbo* in the can, which makes it sound like a typical Hollywood cash in. Except it's not Hollywood as such – directed by an Italian and filmed in Spain – and it launched Eastwood to movie stardom, so we'll forgive them. To top it all there's Ennio Morricone's amazing original score. Getting it in hi-def in the UK involves buying the whole *Man With No Name* trilogy, but who wouldn't want to spend more time in the company of Clint's cigar-chewing gunman? *Yojimbo is available in hi-def, but only on a Region A Criterion Collection platter*

The Fly [1986]

Remake of: *The Fly* [1958]

Canadian auteur David Cronenberg managed to find the perfect balance between his love of 'body-horror' and mainstream success with this astonishing remake. While the lurid CinemaScope original stayed close to George Lanalan's short story of the same name, Cronenberg transformed the material into something far more affecting.

Brilliantly written, acted and directed, this new *Fly* also had the benefit of stomach-churning Academy Award-winning FX from Chris Walas, and Fox's gorgeous Blu-ray release allows you to examine them in even more detail, as well as learn all about the film's gestation thanks to its bountiful extras. *Currently, the original version of The Fly is only available on DVD*



Top-to-bottom: Clint Eastwood made his name as the man with no name in *A Fistful of Dollars*; Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis in *The Fly*; slick horror remake *The Hills Have Eyes*

MARK II
The Departed
reworks
Infernal Affairs



Friday the 13th [2009]

Remake of: *Friday the 13th* 1-4 [1980-84]

Why settle for remaking just one movie when you can do four at once? Not that Platinum Dunes' remake of the legendary stalk-n-slash series crams in every moment from the first four films in the *Friday the 13th* franchise – instead it picks various elements to craft a reboot that feels both new and yet familiar. Throw in lashings of gore and sex – particularly in the Blu-ray's re-edited Killer Cut – and you have a film that succeeds in introducing Jason Voorhees to a new generation while keeping old-school fans happy.

The original Friday the 13th and the first two sequels can be picked up cheap on Blu-ray but Part IV is only available on DVD in the UK and US

The Hills Have Eyes [2006]

Remake of: *The Hills Have Eyes* [1977]

The hills are alive with the sound of slaughter when a holidaying family battle a clan of cannibals in this bloody shocker. While Wes Craven's 1977 original has earned its place as a cult favourite, it's every bit as rough around the edges as you would expect from a low-budget flick and a director still learning his craft.

Alexandre Aja's remake manages to be both slick and sick, mixing modern filmmaking techniques (including a terrifying DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix on Blu-ray) with scenes of excruciating violence that easily match the original. Which means as much as we admire Craven's film, Aja's is the version we keep coming back to. *The original is available on a Region A-locked disc in the US. There's still no word on a UK release*

Insomnia [2001]

Remake of: *Insomnia* [1997]

Let's face it – you didn't watch the original Norwegian version of this snowbound thriller, did you? No worries, because Christopher 'Batman' Nolan's English language update is first-rate. Al Pacino (in an increasingly rare great performance) takes on the role of the sleep-deprived cop investigating a murder in Alaska, while Robin Williams is positively creepy as the local killer.

The film's ending remains suitably downbeat, suggesting Tinseltown might've learned you can't tag a happy finale on everything. Annoyingly, it remains unavailable on UK BD – although an All-region US disc exists. *Unsurprisingly, you can't get the original on Blu-ray here, either*

Invasion of the Body Snatchers [1978]

Remake of: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* [1956]

Like a couple of other films on this list, Don Siegel's 1956 sci-fi has been remade a number >



**'The Friday 13th remake
succeeds in introducing
Jason Voorhees to a new
generation while keeping
old-school fans happy'**

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Avoid!

Ten remakes that should be unmade...

Godzilla



A misfire from director Roland Emmerich, this 1998 revamp is a pure Hollywood monstrosity

Planet of the Apes

Tim Burton's 2001 'reimagining' took all the good ideas from the original and, er, ignored them

A Nightmare on Elm Street

Did we need a retread of Wes Craven's seminal horror flick? Not one as bad as this, no

The Pink Panther



Memo for Hollywood: Steve Martin isn't as funny as Peter Sellers. 'Nuff said

Taxi

The original French cop-comedy is a treat, but this US remake doesn't get out of first gear

Swept Away

Madonna stars in this hideous update of the '70s Italian drama

City of Angels

Nic Cage's love-struck angel ruffled feathers in this remake of *Wings of Desire*

The Haunting

A masterpiece of suggestion and suspense transformed into a hyperactive 1999 CGI-fest

The Vanishing

Hollywood remade the nerve-wracking 1988 Dutch thriller but altered the ending

The Wicker Man

One of the greatest horror films of the 1970s became one of the worst horror films of the 2000s

of times over the years. Which is oddly fitting for a story about people being replaced by identical duplicates.

Undoubtedly, the best of the bunch is Philip Kaufman's award-winning chiller, which relocates the action to San Francisco. While only available on DVD in the UK, the film was released on Blu-ray in the US in late 2010 (as part of a BD/DVD double-pack). Oddly, this Region A-locked BD includes all of the DVD extras except the director's commentary – which therefore remains an exclusive to the standard-def version. *Considering that UK fans had to wait until 2007 for a DVD of the original, it's no surprise that it hasn't been rushed on to Blu-ray yet*

Piranha 3D [2010]

Remake of: *Piranha* [1978]

Written by John Sayles and directed by Joe Dante, the tongue-in-cheek *Piranha* is easily the smartest and wittiest B-movie *Jaws* knock-off. But as brilliant as it is, this 3D remake by Alexandre Aja (who seems to be making a career out of Hollywood horror remakes) is just as much fun. What it lacks in political satire, the remake makes up for with the most outrageously gory onscreen mayhem we've seen in years. Add in some gorgeous leading ladies and fun stereoscopic FX and you have the ultimate party Blu-ray! *The only BD of Dante's original is a feature-packed Region A-locked disc available from the US*

Scarface (1983)

Remake of: *Scarface* (1932)

A fifty-year gap means many people won't have been too concerned that Brian de Palma was remaking Howard Hawks' genre-defining classic. Some may not even know it's a remake – especially as it moves the action from Chicago to Miami, ramps up the violence and drugs to obscene levels, and plays out against a backdrop of Cuban/American tension. Yet the PiP bonus feature on Universal's barnstorming Blu-ray (7.1 DTS-HD mix? Yes, please...) shows how de Palma even framed some shots to be identical to the original – and the basic morality tale hasn't changed a bit. A defining movie of the 1980s, and proof that you can always go back *Fans of the 1932 original can only enjoy it on DVD – no hi-def transfer yet!*

A Star is Born [1954]

Remake of: *A Star is Born* [1937]

Alcoholism. Addiction. Suicide. These aren't things that most people associate with Hollywood musicals (at least, not on the screen). But then most

Hollywood musicals aren't quite like the '50s remake of *A Star is Born*.

A heartbreaking look at the price of fame, this celebrated update features great performances from both Judy Garland and James Mason alongside some toe-tapping musical numbers. As there's still no word on a UK release, fans should import Warner Bros' All-region Deluxe Special Edition Blu-ray from the US for its stunning VC-1 encode (based on a new 6K frame-by-frame restoration) and bumper crop of extras. *There's no UK BD of the original, but an All-region US disc was released at the start of February*

John Carpenter's The Thing

Remake of: *The Thing from Another World*

Incredible as it may seem, John Carpenter's sci-fi horror was a flop at the box office on its original release – during the Summer of 1982 audiences were more interested in seeing the adventures of a friendly alien with a glowing finger than one that twisted the human body into shockingly obscene shapes.

Thankfully, Carpenter's masterpiece has since been rediscovered and reappraised as one of the best chillers of the decade. And while the BD does suffer from Universal's trademark DNR scrubbing, it provides the best showcase to date for Rob Bottin's legendary creature effects. *Having missed the chance to tie-in with the 2011 'pre-make', don't expect the 1951 classic to hit Blu-ray any time soon*

True Grit [2010]

Remake of: *True Grit* [1969]

The Coen brothers aren't exactly strangers to the world of the remake. As much as we (and maybe even they) might try to forget it, the acclaimed filmmaking duo came unstuck back in 2004 when they mounted a do-over of the Ealing classic *The Ladykillers* starring Tom Hanks.

Thankfully, the Coens found themselves on much surer ground with this magnificent Western retread. Nominated for ten Academy Awards, this is a cinematic triumph that quite simply wipes

the floor with the John Wayne original. That it arrived on Blu-ray with a flawless AVC image and DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack only helped to cement its place as a firm favourite in the HCC office.

The John Wayne classic hit UK BD to coincide with the cinema release of the remake

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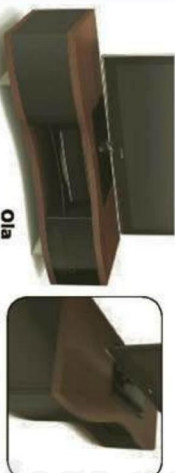


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Stairway to heaven

Mark Craven reports on
a loft-turned-six-seat cinema

→ Kit Checklist

Screen: 80in Screen Research ClearPix 3 AT
Projector: Runco LS5 standard throw
AV receiver: Rotel RSX-1560
Speakers: 5 x Procella P6 ; 1 x Procella P10 subwoofer
Sources: Kaleidescape Cinema One; Sky HD; PS3
Control: Crestron Prodigy PMC2+ including PTX3; Crestron Prodigy TPL4 in wall keypad
Lighting: Lutron four-zone Grafik Eye; RGB LED lighting strip & driver



If your attic is currently used to store Christmas decorations, old Scalextric sets and musty suitcases, it's fair to say you aren't putting it to its best use. Maybe the sight of this alluring loft-based home cinema will spur you on to build your own top-floor movie den.

Completed by Bournemouth-based installer Dawsons, this attic conversion has quickly become the pride and joy of its owners – and, frankly, we're not surprised. It mixes high-end AV with inventive lighting, clever control and, most importantly, a minibar...

Making it simple

The brief from the owners was to the point. They wanted a simple-to-use cinema system built into the space available, and one that all the family could enjoy. To meet that end, a Kaleidescape Cinema One DVD server and Crestron smart control were installed, as well as

Sky HD and a PlayStation 3. The server is also viewable from the owner's own computer, letting him monitor what the children are watching upstairs.

Other neat touches, such as the motorised blind on the Velux window that automatically shuts when the cinema is in use, make this room almost idiot-proof.

Because of the attic's dimensions, the projector screen from Screen Research is only 80in. It's also acoustically transparent, allowing the front three Procella P6 speakers (and the 2 x 10in driver active subwoofer) to be mounted behind it in the custom-built wall. A Runco LS5 projector serves up the hi-def visuals, while amplification comes from a rack-mounted Rotel 1650 AV receiver.

Dawsons admits that the layout of the room and overall size restricted the placement of the Procella cabinets. The front left and right

speakers are placed as wide apart as possible behind the acoustic screen, and the rears on the back wall are at a level with the seating zones to maintain the best performance. However, calculations found unavoidable standing waves that needed to be rectified by acoustic treatment, hence the panelling at either ends of the room.

Take a seat

With the electronics sorted, the final jobs were to install the two tiers of cinema seating (the rear three are raised up) and fit the lighting, including colour-changing LEDs around the seating stage and bar.

As you'd expect, the owners are very happy with the finished result: 'The installation is fantastic, and we have thoroughly enjoyed the cinema so far. It has become a bit of a family event that we all sit down and pick a film – and all we need to supply is the popcorn!' >

Space race:

This room shows what can be achieved in a relatively small space

40 INSTALL



Room essentials

A Come on down!

Converting your loft to a home cinema is all very well if you can't easily get up there. Dawsons' solution was to install this motorised staircase, incorporated into the Crestron control system. The wall-mounted Crestron PTL-4 keypad also has PIN protection, meaning the owners' children can't sneak in and cause mayhem when they should be doing homework...

B Simple selection

With the brief being to make the system as easy to use as possible, it's unsurprising that a Kaleidescape player lurks in the Middle Atlantic rack – this provides slick, searchable access to the family's DVD collection

C Seat of power

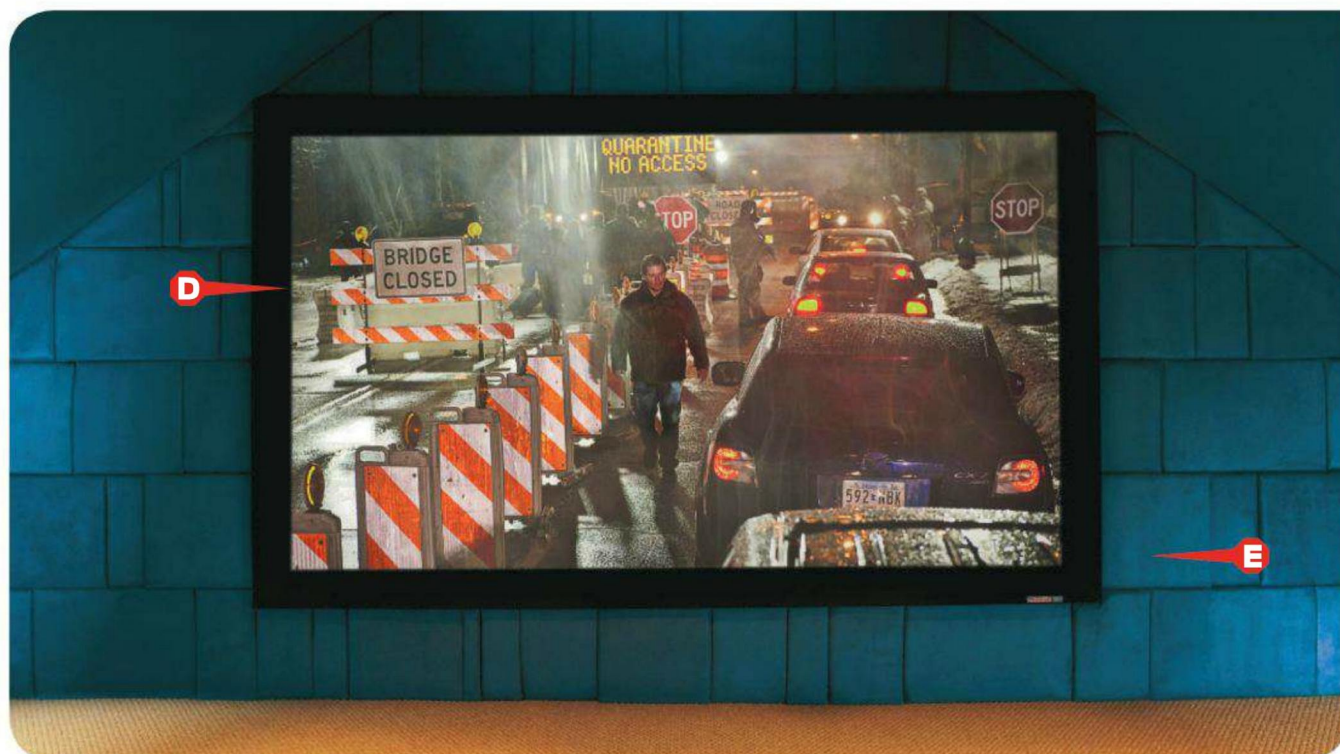
A Rotel 1560 AV receiver provides 100W-per-channel amplification to the Procella speakers, and provides lossless audio decoding of the PS3 and Kaleidescape sources

D As big as can be

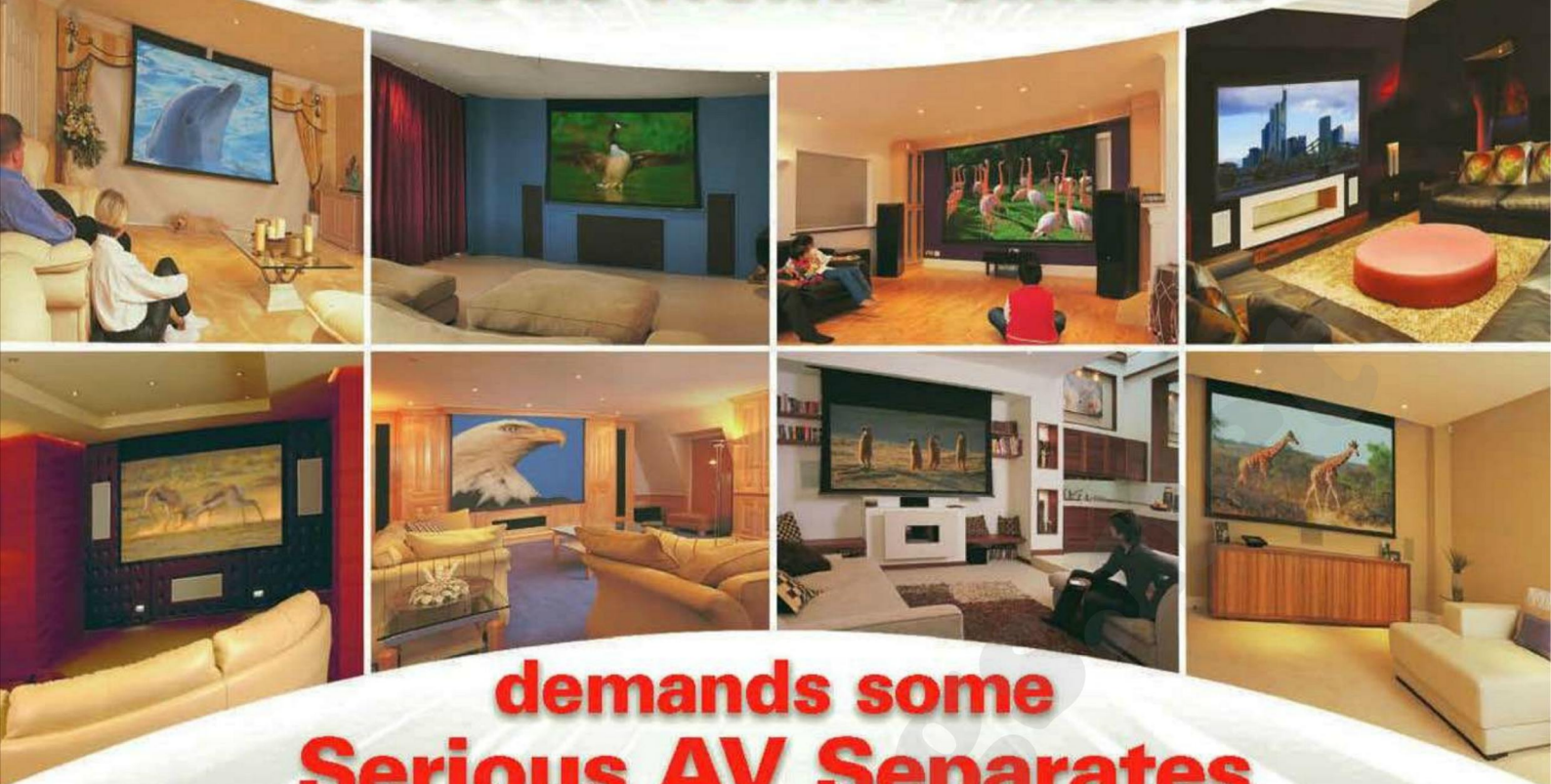
The sloping roof of the cinema room means that 80in was the limit in terms of projector screen – the model chosen was a ClearPix 3 from Screen Research

E Wall of sound

The left, right and centre channel speakers are housed in this false wall, sited behind the screen. The wall has also been fitted with suede-covered acoustic panels



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Full HD films on a fantastic scale



Martin Pipe marvels at a dedicated multiregion movie palace with 4.2m screen – and a Linux PC...

The proud owner of this stunning cinema room in South Africa – complete with unique 5000-element fibre-optic star ceiling – is a true movie-holic, to the point where the cinema was the first room to be completed during a comprehensive home-renovation project. In fact, the property already featured a home cinema, but during initial discussions with installer Sphere Custom it became clear that the existing room would not accommodate what the film-mad owner had in mind.

It was decided instead to start from a 'clean slate', and a dedicated extension for the proposed 12m x 7m room was constructed.

As a system nominated in the Over £100,000 category at the CEDIA Awards 2011, it's not much of a surprise to find the owner is impressed with the result. Indeed, he goes as far as to say that the system 'literally' blew him away.

To the power of three

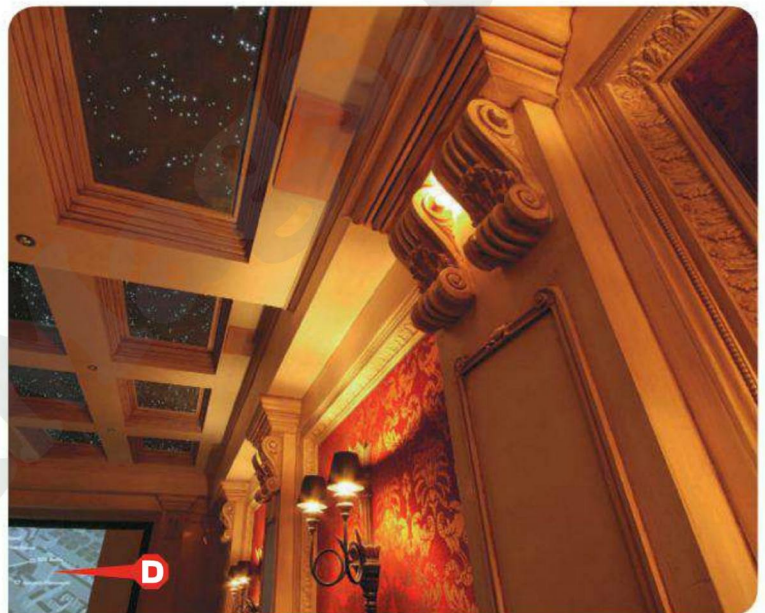
This reaction might have something to do with the trio of 1,800W

Artcoustic multichannel power amplifiers driving an enormous 7.3 speaker setup (chosen not only for its sonic prowess but its ability to be blend in with the room's decor) from the same company. The subwoofer array of this alone consists of no fewer than twelve 10in drive units, built into three massive enclosures. Those muscle amps are fed by an Integra DHC80.3 processor, which boasts all of the features and connectivity that home cinema at this level demands. A total of eight HDMI inputs can



→ Kit Checklist

Projection: Cineversum BlackWing One Projector and Cinemax 2.35 Theatre Kit (anamorphic lens)
Screen: Screen Excellence 4.2m wide Vistacurve A/T Anamorphic fixed frame
Amplification: Integra DHC 80.3 processor and 3x Artcoustic PA-1800 multichannel power amplifiers
Blu-ray: Cambridge Audio Azur 650 BD (modified for multiregion and multizone Blu-ray/DVD playback)
Other sources: Linux media centre PC running XBMC for playback of movies stored on hard disk
Front and centre speakers: Artcoustic Spitfire Venue
Rear and side-surround speakers: Artcoustic Diablo Monitor
Subwoofer: Artcoustic Spitfire
Control: Crestron TPS-6X 5.7in wireless touch-screen controller
Seating: 15x leather recliners
Décor: 5,000-piece fibre-optic 'star ceiling'



accommodate all manner of sources, although so far only a Cambridge Audio Azur 650BD universal Blu-ray player, and, surprisingly, a Linux PC are plumbed in.

The latter runs the versatile XBMC Media Player, which is free software you don't need a £100,000-plus budget to try. It's good to see that Kaleidescape doesn't have a complete monopoly on top-end systems. Meanwhile, the BD deck has been modified for multiregion/multizone disc playback, which is vital as the owner eagerly snaps up releases while on his global travels.

Something a high budget is necessary for, however, is the cutting-edge display combination installed here. The owner and Sphere opted for Cineversum's style-conscious BlackWing One, a superb three-chip LCoS projector

that certainly impressed us when it was reviewed back in 2009. Because of its age, this Full HD beast isn't capable of 3D playback, but 2.35:1 presentations are taken in the system's stride courtesy of a Cineversum Cinemax anamorphic lens kit. This throws its images onto one of the cinema's other highlights – a 4.2m Screen Excellence Vistacurve acoustically transparent fixed-frame screen.

Because a large extended family is entertained in this movie den on a regular basis, there are no fewer than 15 leather recliners. No one, thankfully, has been baffled by the touchpanel Crestron control. Says the owner: 'It's easy to use and we have hardly had to ask any questions about how to operate what we thought was going to be a complex system.'

Room essentials

A Anamorphically yours

This 4.2m Vistacurve screen – reputedly one of the largest in the country – does 2.35 movies full justice

B Take a seat spot

These luxurious recliners give up to fifteen people comfortable viewing

C Under the stars

One of the highlights of this install is definitely the 5000-point 'star ceiling', built with fibre-optics

D DVDs on demand

The cinema's lighting is controlled, together with the rest of the system, from a Crestron touchpad

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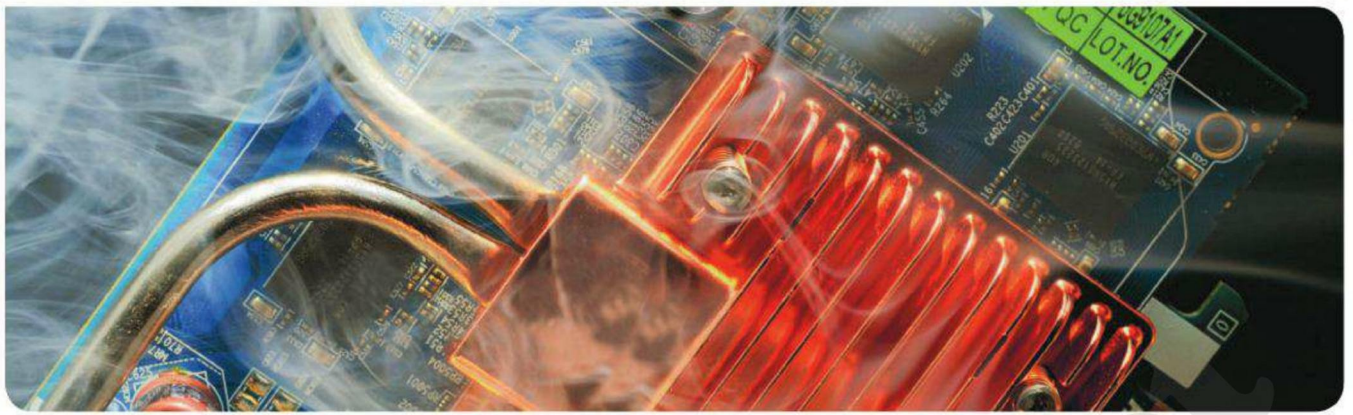
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A360 September 2011

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DIGITAL COPY

Mark Craven learns the hard way that his AV receiver is the beating heart of his home cinema – and vows to treat it with more respect

My AV receiver died last week. Not with any sense of drama, I should add. There were no loud bangs, no plumes of acrid smoke, no flying bits of black metal. It just refused to switch on.

I blame myself, of course. A desire to reduce my electricity bills a touch meant I had actually switched it off when I went away for a weekend. At the wall. I'd never done that before and I certainly won't ever do it again.

My first thought was 'Oh, it's probably just the fuse in the plug.' This is my stock response to any electrical failure. When I discovered that the same plug was perfectly capable of powering my subwoofer I realised I was in trouble, because, while I love AV gadgets more than my own grandmother, I have next to no knowledge of how they work. The upshot of this is that I have been living without an AVR for ten days. And, you know what? It's horrible.

Worthy of worship

When friends and relatives visit my house they often marvel at my flatscreen TV and dribble over my floorstanding speakers. Some of them even coo at my all-in-one remote control, even though **it's a horrid bit of kit that I should've thrown away months ago**. None of them, however, has ever offered much more than a cursory glance at my AVR. It is, after all, just a black box that sits in the corner.

From now on, though, I promise I will put it on a diamond-encrusted pedestal, lit from underneath by a forest of LEDs so no one can miss it. My receiver, I've realised, is the best thing in my system, because without it my home cinema experience has completely fallen apart.

Firstly, and obviously, I haven't watched any surround sound movies – my rear speakers and subwoofer have become expensive ornaments. This, for someone who loves watching movies

with lossless audio flying around the living room, is a major blow.

But it gets worse – I haven't even been watching any Blu-rays at all. While some people would think, 'Well, I can still enjoy hi-def,' I'm too lazy to actually unplug my BD-spinner from the back of the AVR and plumb it straight into my TV. Cinematic delights as *Marley & Me: The Puppy Years* sit on the coffee table, unwatched.

This means I'm now watching a lot more broadcast TV. And as if this wasn't bad enough (is there anything on regular telly worth watching other than *MasterChef?*), I'm watching it with squawky stereo, courtesy of the miniaturised drivers squeezed into my flatscreen. When you've got used to watching *everything* in faux surround, courtesy of Dolby Pro-Logic II, and accompanied by a grumbling subwoofer, it's like being put into a sensory deprivation tank. Even my wife, who until now has shown no interest in the system at all, has asked 'Why aren't the speakers on?'

You want more? Okay. I'm not listening to CDs any more, because my TV's speakers won't do them justice, I'm not playing games on my PS3 (for the same reason) and I haven't shown anyone my holiday snaps because they're all stored on the PS3's hard drive and, again, I'm too lazy to rewire everything.

The good news is this period of AV anxiety will soon be over. I'm sending the receiver off for a service this week, where hopefully a man in blue overalls will fix whatever the hell is wrong with it and all will be right in the world. I'm already amassing a weekend's worth of hi-octane actioners to savour.

And there are two things I've learnt. One is that my AV receiver is the best thing I'll ever own. The other is that I need to learn how my AV components work so I can fix them myself ●

What's the component of your system that you couldn't live without? Let us know via letters@homecinemachoice.com

Gym-phobe **Mark Craven** would have sent his receiver off to be mended sooner, but it took a week to find someone strong enough to lift it





FILM FANATIC

Things are starting to get pretty steamy around these parts as **The Beek** pays tribute to a late master of modern erotic cinema

February saw the death of an auteur, the likes of which the film industry may never see again. The man in question – 70-year-old writer/director/producer/actor Zalman King – was a veritable legend amongst fans of softcore erotica with artistic aspirations. That might explain the lack of coverage in the mainstream media.

King's passing heralds the end of a specific type of upscale sex film. A sub-genre that mixed attractive people pretending to get it on with gauzy aesthetic touches – diaphanous white curtains blowing in the breeze, horizontal slats of light shining through window blinds, unbelievably large numbers of candles, etc. Sometimes you got all three elements at the same time against an aural backdrop of wailing saxophones.

The best known of these is, of course, the 1986 Mickey Rourke and Kim Basinger film *Nine 1/2 Weeks*. Written and produced by King, the film was a flop in the US on its original release, but a huge success in Europe. Since then, this story of a beautiful but naive young woman meeting a handsome stranger and embarking on an odyssey of sexual discovery has gone on to find fame on first video and then DVD.

Female empowerment

This concept of a glamorous woman finding self-empowerment through erotic encounters with an enigmatic stranger is one that King would return to again and again. **Witness Sherilyn Fenn's debutante giving up her posh lifestyle for a roll in the hay with a carnival worker** in 1988's *Two Moon Junction*; Carré Otis' lawyer exploring her limits with a self-made millionaire in the following year's *Wild Orchid*; or Audie England's struggling writer finding inspiration in a series of sexual encounters in King's 1995 adaptation of Anaïs Nin's *Delta of Venus*.

This premise also formed the cornerstone of his biggest hit, the US cable TV series *Red Shoe Diaries*. Clocking up 66 episodes between 1992 and 1997, the steamy show followed a simple template established in the pilot movie. Here, David 'The X-Files' Duchovny plays a bereaved man who finds his dead fiancée's diary and learns of an affair she had with a construction worker during their engagement. Duchovny's character subsequently returned in the framing sequence for each episode, reading tales of passion that women sent him in response to a newspaper personal ad.

As with King's movies, *Red Shoe Diaries* carved out a sizeable female audience. And it is this that marks out his work as being so different from the his contemporaries. While the likes of screenwriter Joe 'Basic Instinct' Eszterhas popularised erotic thrillers aimed primarily at men (and which frequently tied explicit female sexuality to 'damaged' characters, if not complete psychos), King always sided with his female protagonists.

So, while King's work is often characterised by its leaden plotting and laughably bad attempts at cod-poetic dialogue ('He made love like he worked on the street – tender as a jackhammer'), there's also plenty he should be commended for. Not least, bringing a touch of class to erotic movies and making them something you didn't always have to feel ashamed about owning.

And, while King has passed away and there's little chance of seeing his like in cinema ever again, the impact of his work continues to live on in modern cable TV, where the likes of HBO's *True Blood* are on hand to serve up couple-friendly kinkiness. Only here you get well-written dialogue and vampires, too ●

Are there any other film genres you mourn the passing of?
Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com

Anton van Beek would like to make it clear that, unlike David Duchovny, he doesn't want people sending him their tales of erotic awakenings



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Feedback

Got an axe to grind? Want to comment on current technology? Need to share? **HCC** is here to help

Plasma is the 3D king

Subject to Stephen Old's letter in *HCC* 205 about 3DTV being of very poor quality – sorry, I don't agree. I have a Panasonic 50in plasma TV that I've owned for one year and in my view it's one of the best 3DTVs around. If Stephen is watching a 3DTV or seen a demo of 3D and he is getting crosstalk then I would imagine he is watching the images on an LCD or LED TV, not a plasma. I have not noticed any crosstalk issues at all, and wearing the glasses isn't an issue when the room is dark.

So, my point is, if you're buying into 3D (which I would highly recommend) buy a decent Active 3D plasma TV, not LED or LCD,



Plasma: The best display tech for 3D, says *HCC* reader Andy

and enjoy the ride. My only gripe is the industry isn't fast enough in bringing out new 3D films. *Andy, Honiton, Devon*

3D is a knockout!

I was pleased to see some strong staff support for 3DTV in a recent *HCC*. Having just gone

3D – with a Panasonic 46GT30, Marantz 5005 player and the Sky 1TB box – I find it a total knock-out, with documentaries my biggest surprise; benefiting greatly from the depth-of-field layers, allowing one to notice much more detail (true of films, too). No wonder David Attenborough is such a 3D fan.

When viewing 3D, I raise contrast and brilliance levels to compensate for the glasses' image-dulling but I'm increasingly dialling back on this. Neither have I experienced any headaches, even after long viewing sessions.

As for wearing 3D glasses, what's the problem? People wear sunglasses indoors when they don't need to do so, so see 3D glasses in this light. It's likely

Star Letter



My hardware is just a means to an end

Just finished reading Richard Stevenson's article in the last issue of *HCC* (205) about the size and presence of AV kit.

I added a custom-built home cinema as part of an extension to my house about four years ago. I had a simple philosophy; make it like a cinema, only smaller. When you go to see a movie in commercial cinemas you don't see the kit. You don't see pictures on the wall. You don't see ornaments. You don't walk into something that looks like the *Starship Enterprise*. You go into a subdued environment to watch a movie. What's important is the picture and the sound. And that was my ethos; try and create a small theatre with a great picture and fantastic

sound. But without teenagers sitting next to me playing on their mobile phones.

My kit is behind me and shut away in a cupboard. Well, it's a cupboard to me but it's a small MidAtlantic rack. Inside is a Denon AV thingy (AVC A1XVA), an old (well, old now) Denon DVD A1XV, a Denon Blu-ray player and a Sky HD box. When I look at some of your featured installs with loads of kit I wonder what I'm missing! The PJ is a SIM2 C3X1080 and it goes on to a Screen Research X-mask acoustically transparent 144in-wide screen with three B&W Signature 8NT's behind, two pairs of DS7s and a couple of

Velodyne DD12s. These subs are the only bits of kit you see and I wish I'd had in-built subs. The whole effect is clean and uncluttered and when you watch a movie (or Sky Sports Champions League football

nights – not that my team's competing) – it's fantastic.

I subscribe to your magazine and I do love it. I'm usually disappointed when I realise I'm at the last page, sad git. But I am usually critical of some of the special installs and it seems to me that they can be a tad ostentatious. For me, less is more. I'm amazed at specialist installers' ads showing 'feature' projects with pictures hanging on walls right next to the screen. All those reflections; wouldn't be me.

The writer of the Star Letter in *HCC* 205 is a guy after my own heart when he concludes 'do the one thing everybody seems to have forgotten how to



to be a long wait for (pricey) glasses-free 3DTV so wear the glasses and have 3D now!

I thought the TV frame limitation (mentioned by a reader) would be troublesome but it isn't. I view 3D as if looking through an open window where, as in real life, the 'outside' 3D stops at the frame and, as not in real life, cobras and dragons sometimes surge through that window and spit venom and fire straight into my face.

Obviously, the bigger the TV screen the better but even in the cinema, unless you're in the front row, the screen-frame is always peripherally visible, and in the average multiplex the picture is so appalling, with dim, fuzzy images only aggravating the dulling of the 3D glasses, it's no wonder people are put off 3D. By contrast, a well setup HD/3DTV has pin-sharp and luminous images. Wait for the 3D Blu-ray, I say!

Already there's a wide range of programmes on Sky 3D, with more in the pipeline, and a lot of 3D films due on BD, too. So what are you waiting for?

John Oakley

HCC has always been a supporter of 3D – any new

do – enjoy the story!' Amen. The kit is only a means to an end. No matter how good.
Victor Meldrew, aka Steve Russell, via email

Thanks for your letter Steve. We're glad you've got the home cinema experience you wanted (we'd love to see some pictures!). However, we can't agree with you about 'ornaments' – if you've spent your life collecting *Friday 13th* dolls and *Alien* figurines (like *The Beek*) then where better to put them than your own home cinema?

Winner: Star Letter-writer Steve Russell wins a copy of *Straw Dogs* on Blu-ray. It's available to buy on Blu-ray and DVD March 12, courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

3D fan David Attenborough



video format is bound to get us excited. Of course, we're not going to expect everyone to 'sign up' to it – the cost of new hardware, software and subscriptions isn't something that can be ignored...

Choosing a screen

I've enjoyed the magazine for quite some time now and am considering purchasing a Sony VPL-VW95ES to complete my home cinema setup, which currently consists of a 42in Panasonic VT20, Pioneer LX55 receiver, Denon DBP-2012UD player, Sky ITB HD and a set of Monitor Audio Apex speakers. Lots of research led me to these products, all of which were highly rated by yourselves in recent editions. My only concern is that as a home cinema magazine, and I have been buying it for over six years now, you are severely lacking in your reviews of projector screens. I'm sure an editorial some while back mentioned this and promised some screen reviews 'to come', and which never materialised. I would imagine that the screen can make a huge difference or else no-one would bother with one and instead would simply throw the image onto a painted wall!

There are plenty of manufacturers out there, Screen Research, Draper, Da-Lite and Stewart to name but a few, and price points ranging from a few hundred pounds to several thousand. There are static screens, manual screens and

motorised screens. And then there are the screen materials, of which there are loads! One that interests me is a 'silver' screen for optimising 3D playback. I understand that a silver screen has higher 'extinction values' which helps when dealing with polarised light (3D playback). Is that important if, like me, you are considering a 3D projector? Will it reduce 3D crosstalk? And what about screen 'gain'?

I am sure you could devote a whole issue to this very subject! I am finding it bewildering trying to gather information on all of these factors and an article explaining some of the finer points to be considered when choosing a screen housing and surface material would be greatly appreciated.

Al Clewley, via email

Yes, it's critically important to choose a screen that's worthy of your projected image (we'll concentrate on front-projection here – the alternative rear-projection approach is uncommon in home cinema). For too long, many PJ owners have been only too happy to use a cheap screen of the type that was popular in the last millennium for showing Super-8 home movies, or project the image onto a whitewashed wall. Both are far from satisfactory, and deliver a mediocre performance. Even if your budget is limited, there's no reason why you could not

purchase the screen material (companies like The Widescreen Centre sell it by the metre, although the fixed widths available will dictate the size of screen), build a frame out of timber, and stretch the material tautly across it – the whole construction can then be mounted on the wall.

If you do have the necessary funds, you can buy a ready-constructed screen – or even a ceiling-mounted motorised one that, once connected to the trigger output of your projector or processor/AVR, will lower when your system is switched on and raise again when your viewing session has finished.

Others can be raised or lowered manually, via a chain-type arrangement similar to that used for blinds, or mounted on a tripod for temporary use. More advanced systems also use motorisation to apply 'masking' – black material on the screen borders – so that the aspect ratio of the visible area reflects that of the projected image. In all cases, though, it's important to choose the correct material – and this is where terms like 'gain' and 'perf' are mentioned.

'Perf' refers to minute perforations in the screen material. This type is more acoustically-transparent and is used if you have a centre speaker behind the screen. However, the pitch of the holes >

50 LETTERS

is a key consideration – the pattern can ‘beat’ with the pixel pattern of the projector and cause an obtrusive moiré effect. Perf screens were popular in the days of CRT projectors, where there were no microdevice pixel structures to deal with, but are no longer quite so common.

Now the more important area of gain – the industry term used to describe the amount of light reflected from a screen surface. A matt white screen has a gain of 1. It’s a good choice if your projector isn’t particularly bright, and you have control over the ambient light levels of your room. For PJs with particularly low light output, ‘high-power’ screens with a gain of around 3 are available. This is achieved by incorporating a highly-reflective glass beaded surface into the screen material. Their downside, susceptibility to ambient light apart, is a reduced viewing angle. At the other end of the scale are ‘high contrast’ screens, with gains lower than 1. With their grey appearance, the projected image isn’t as bright as a matt white screen. However, contrast and black levels are subjectively improved. High-contrast screens are particularly recommended for use with ‘bright’ projectors, notably LCD types.

Screens: Different shapes and types



Screens for 3D use are a different ballgame, and your choice will be determined by the technology that your 3D PJ uses. For Passive 3D projectors, which rely on light polarisation to distinguish the left- and right-eye views, silver screens are usually recommended for minimal crosstalk (‘ghosting’). These screens retain the polarisation of the projected light – a parameter listed on the spec-sheets of such screens as the ‘extinction ratio’. Silver screens are, alas,

notorious for an unwanted ‘hot spot’ effect and limited viewing angle when 2D material is being watched; some well-heeled enthusiasts even dedicate different screens to 2D and 3D projection. One manufacturer, Stewart, is selling a screen material that it claims meets the requirements of both 2D and 3D.

For Active 3D projectors conventional screens can be used. However, the light is attenuated by the glasses and so higher screen gains should be considered.

We’re over simplifying here.

Screens are a complex subject to which a full article could indeed be dedicated (as we have done in the past). And as for reviews of screens themselves – we’re working on it – and check out the Screen Innovations Black Diamond Zero Edge on p76. As always, we advise you to discuss screen requirements with your dealer – ideally the same one that is selling you the projector. Hopefully you’ll be able to view different screens with the projector of your choice, and choose the type that gives the best results.

Game on!

After toying with the side edges of certain pages in previous issues, it was good to see the games reviews break from their shackles and take up a place where they belong in the March issue. I have no problem in seeing games reviews in your mag and from the write-ups so far you indicate they will be better than those of tabloid newspapers that give five stars to just about everything!

Neil McAlister, Maidstone

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What’s wrong with my Wi-Fi?

I tried to fit a Panasonic wireless LAN adaptor to my Panasonic G20 flatscreen TV. I followed the instructions from my television manual but when I ask the TV to confirm it has found the device it says ‘device not found’ – although it does confirm my Wi-Fi details and that Wi-Fi is connected. Can you advise what else I can try? Or do I need a different wireless LAN adaptor for this TV? It did state in the shop that this adaptor would work with my screen but alas it does not.

Anthony, via email

Well, we’ll certainly try! A Panasonic techie told us that the ‘device not found’ message applies to connecting an external HDD via USB, and has nothing to do with wireless dongles. If your TV confirms its Wi-Fi details, it would suggest that the wireless connection to your router is working – if this is the case, then the dongle must also be working. All rather



confusing, and so it would probably be best to go back to the beginning. The correct Wi-Fi adaptor for this TV has the Panasonic model number DY-WL10E-K (pictured), and others are not guaranteed to work. Plug this device into the USB socket, and from the setup menu select ‘network setup’. By default, the top item (network type) is ‘wired’. Change this to ‘wireless’. The second item, ‘access point settings’, should now be accessible; if the wired network option is selected, it’s greyed out because it’s not relevant. Select the ‘access point settings’ option that applies to your wireless network.

If your network router supports WPS (Wi-Fi Protected Setup), then your job is made easier. Press your network device’s WPS button, and then press the WPS/connect button shown in the TV menu. Note that some equipment

manufacturers give WPS a user-friendly name; Netgear, for example, calls it ‘Push ‘n’ Connect’. A PIN alternative for WPS is also offered, should your network work with that. If your network doesn’t support this newer technology, select instead the menu’s ‘search for networks’ button. If all is well, a list of available wireless networks in the vicinity will be displayed after the search has completed. This will include your neighbour’s networks – so be sure to select yours! If you’re not using any security on your network (not advisable!), then you can connect. Under most circumstances, though, you will need to enter your network’s Wi-Fi encryption key before connecting. If everything is working, a ‘connection test’ (the network menu’s fifth option) should complete successfully. You should now be able to use your TV’s VieraCast and DLNA features. If you have any further problems, give the Panasonic customer support line a call on 0844 844 3899.

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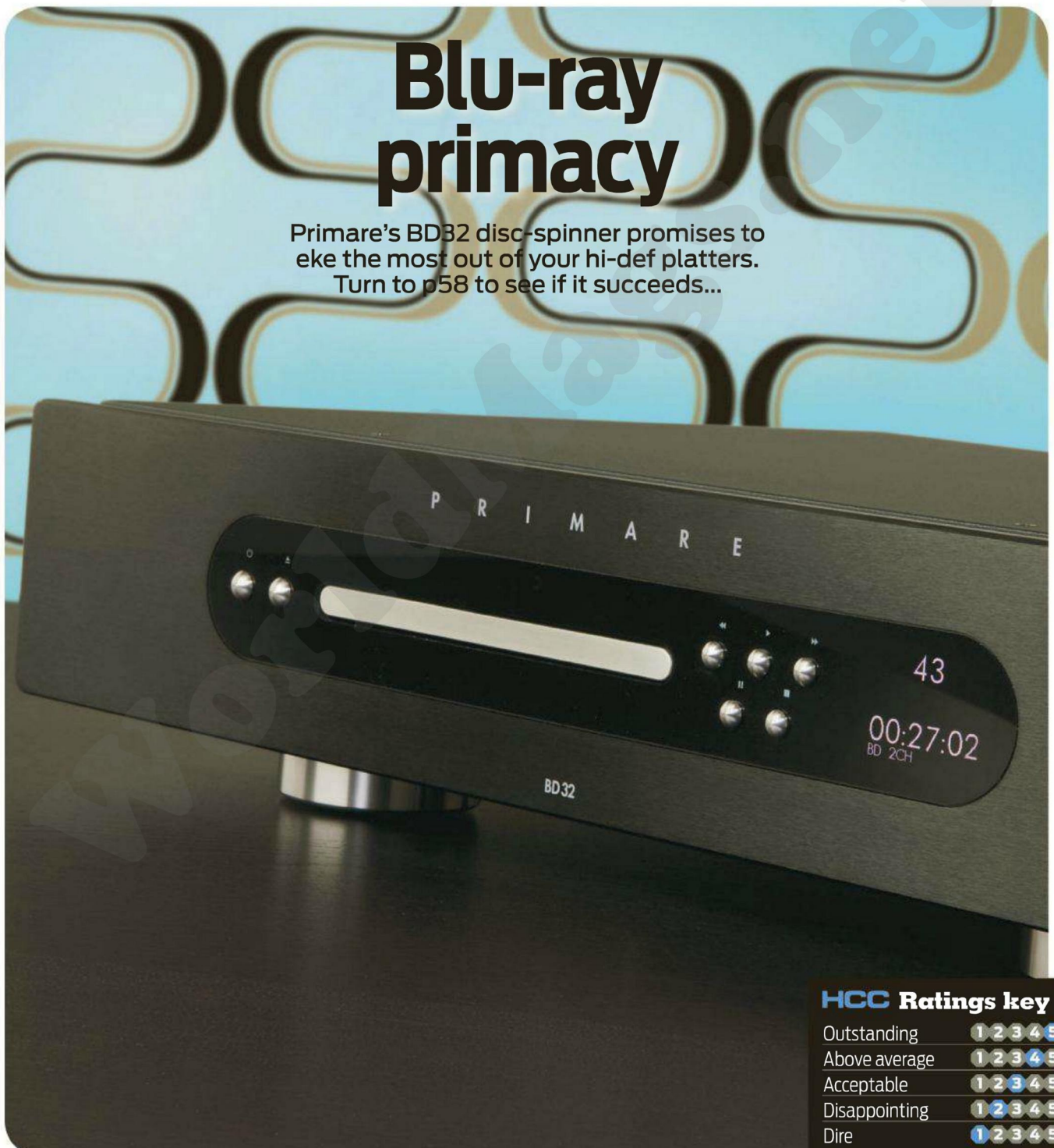


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 SONY Second-gen ES-branded 3D projector TOSHIBA Affordable 40in LED TV SIM2 Single-chip
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 BOSTON ACOUSTICS 2.1 BD solution HARMAN/KARDON All-in-one home cinema AND MORE!

Blu-ray primacy

Primare's BD32 disc-spinner promises to
 eke the most out of your hi-def platters.
 Turn to p58 to see if it succeeds...



HCC Ratings key

Outstanding	1 2 3 4 5
Above average	1 2 3 4 5
Acceptable	1 2 3 4 5
Disappointing	1 2 3 4 5
Dire	1 2 3 4 5

HCC DOESN'T BELIEVE IN OVER-PRAISING HARDWARE. CONSEQUENTLY, A THREE-STAR RATING SHOULDN'T BE CONSIDERED A BAD RESULT – IT SIMPLY MEANS THAT A PRODUCT PERFORMS ACCORDING TO ITS CATEGORY POSITION. A FIVE-STAR RATING IS ONLY AWARDED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

54 SAMSUNG UE55ES8000 → Approx £2,500



Dual-core delight

Samsung's new 55in LED TV goes into innovation overdrive. **John Archer** reckons it's the cleverest TV he's yet seen

The first big new TV release of 2012 is here, in the comely shape of Samsung's UE55ES8000. And if its level of technological advancement and all-round quality is symptomatic of what we might also expect from other brands in the coming weeks and months, then the rest of the year could be pretty special.

As ever with Samsung TVs, the UE55ES8000's campaign to win your heart begins immediately, thanks to the seductively glinting, staggeringly slender frame around its vast 55in screen. Its new 'double bar' pedestal stand design is very pretty, too.

Connectivity is outstanding. Highlights include four v1.4 HDMI (to support the set's active shutter 3D playback), two USBs able to play a wide variety of multimedia file formats, an Ethernet port, and built-in Wi-Fi.

Samsung was one of the strongest brands last year where online 'Smart' TV functionality was concerned, but that hasn't stopped it advancing the Smart TV cause with the this year's flagship model.

For a start, Samsung's Smart Hub menu screen now looks even prettier and more 'HD' than before, thanks to a shift to a Full HD resolution from last year's 720p incarnation.

Also catching the eye are three completely new Smart TV content sections. First up is Family Story, a potentially handy new online service that enables you to create closed, password-protected networks with other Smart TV/smart device users. The idea here is for families and friends to be able to share photographs, memos and diaries

with each other, no matter where they live, without worrying about strangers intruding on their content. Naturally you don't need a Samsung Smart TV to use the service; suitable apps for Android tablets and smartphones will be available by the time you read this.

Sitting next to Family Story is a new Fitness zone, offering a useful toolset for getting fit without having to spend a fortune joining a gym. The system works by letting you set up profiles for different family members featuring weight and Body Mass Index measurements, and then providing a decently extensive set of exercise videos, complete with an estimated calorie count for each one.

The TV can calculate how many calories you've burned off with these videos and translate that to potential weight loss over time, delivering charts of your progress. It's not quite as sophisticated or accurate as I'd like, but overall it should easily satisfy the 'home exercise' brigade.

The final big new section of Samsung's Smart TV platform is simply called Kids, and chiefly comprises a collection (currently a rather small one, to be honest) of obscure kid's TV shows. But there is also a fun 'sticker book' into which children can place on-screen stickers awarded by parents for different

AV/CV

PRODUCT: 55in Edge LED TV with micro dimming, active 3D and cutting-edge Smart TV support

POSITION: Samsung's new flagship TV for 2012

PEERS: LG 55LW980T, Panasonic TX-P55VT30

Samsung has introduced a new pedestal design to its flagship LED model

56 REVIEWS

types of good behaviour. Like not sitting on your 3D spex.

As well as these entire new Smart TV sections, Samsung's Smart TV platform has also enjoyed a few extra apps and video services since last year, including most notably, Netflix. Furthermore, since the UE55ES8000 is a high-end Samsung TV, it gets the Skype support (a camera is elegantly built into its upper edge) and integrated web browser not found in lower-rent Samsung models.

Voice control

Samsung hasn't just innovated with its Smart TV content. It's also attempted some pretty revolutionary stuff when it comes to its Smart interface. The UE55ES8000 ships with two remote controls: one 'normal' one, and one featuring a touchpad and voice control.

Anyone who's tried to surf the web via a normal TV remote or felt frustrated by the limitations of a handset's normal 'up, down, left, right' keys will immediately appreciate the touchpad, as it lets you quickly move a cursor in any direction all over the screen. And the trackpad on Samsung's handset delivers just the right amount of sensitivity.

The minimal button layout on this touchpad remote is also mostly well considered, with my only significant quibble being the way you have to press the touchpad down to select a highlighted option. It's very easy to accidentally move the cursor off your desired option as you do this.

One button on the second handset labelled 'Voice' calls into play another key innovation in the UE55ES8000's interface 'arsenal': voice control. By simply talking to the TV, either directly or through the second remote, you can do everything from changing volume and channel to inputting text into search fields, opening different sources, and even choosing direct channel numbers on a connected Sky box via a supplied IR extender.

The recognition system is good enough to correctly reproduce even fairly obscure spoken names, phrases and words (so long as you pronounce them carefully). It's also great that the system is only activated by saying a keyword, such as Hi TV, so it doesn't keep accidentally

Thin is still in:

Yep, this is yet another super-slim Samsung set

Two options:

As well as the traditional handset, the TV comes with a touchpad controller



kicking in every time you speak to other people in your room. Add the voice control to the touchpad remote, and you really do have a cool new way of controlling a sophisticated modern TV.

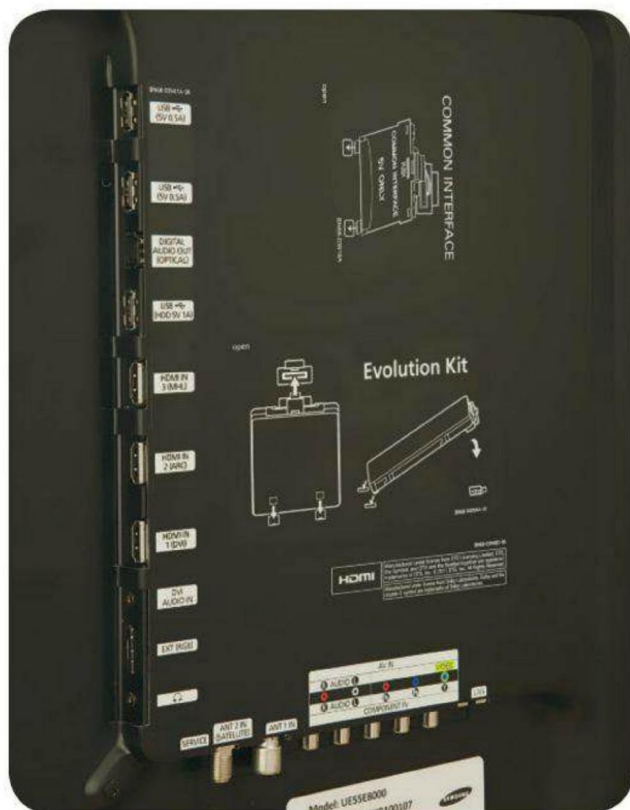
The only catch with the voice control system is that occasionally during very loud sequences, the system becomes concerned it might not be able to hear your commands, and throws up a distracting alarm message to that effect. So you're

best turning it off for blockbuster movie viewing.

The UE55ES8000 even includes a gesture control system, where the built-in camera maps movements of your hands to movements of the onscreen cursor. However, I've so far found this to be too fiddly, tiring and prone to 'accidentally' firing up.

With great power...

These Smart features would be irrelevant if the UE55ES8000 couldn't



Hang on: Side-mounted connections make this TV easy to wall-mount

deliver quality image. Thankfully, the power driving its new interface and Smart TV services also boosts its picture quality.

For instance, tricky scenes such as the 'Mother Knows Best' sequence in *Tangled*, with its bright animation appearing against almost pitch black backgrounds, have much more punch than on last year's Samsung models – or most LED TVs generally – thanks to the way bright whites

'The UE55ES8000 wins your heart immediately, thanks to its seductive, glinting, slender frame'

and dynamic colours can share the frame with good black levels. This improvement seems down to Samsung's use of a dual-core processor in the ES8000 series (potentially upgradable in the future to quad-core, via new slot-in chipsets!), which has enabled the brand to work with twice as many microdimming zones as last year.

Sharpness levels with HD sources are extreme, boosted by both the extreme brightness the image consistently delivers, and what's comfortably the best motion handling yet seen from a Samsung TV, with practically zero judder and minimal motion blur. The dual-core

processor's speed and power appears to be in play again here – especially if you activate Samsung's motion processing, which works more effectively than any previous versions.

The speed of the UE55ES8000's panel response and improved processing is further evident when watching 3D. This set proves far less prone to crosstalk noise than any previous Samsung screen. It's still occasionally visible around objects in the far distance, especially if they're very bright compared with their surroundings (like the furthest lanterns in the famed *Tangled* lantern festival sequence), but it's now gone from being a constant nuisance to something you scarcely notice.

Making this more impressive is the brightness and colour Samsung retains in its 3D images, as its comfortable 3D glasses (of which you get two pairs free) 'dim' the picture much less than some other Active shutter goggles. The reduced crosstalk also lets you appreciate the immense sharpness, detailing and 'polish' you get with Active as opposed to Passive 3D on screen sizes as large as this. The dual-core tech means, too, that Samsung can apply motion processing to 3D as well as 2D images this year, further enhancing clarity and sense of depth.

In short, the UE55ES8000's 3D images are generally outstanding. My gripe with them would be that the need to drive the panel 'harder' to keep 3D images bright results in some backlight inconsistencies in the image's corners during predominantly dark scenes.

Sort out the presets!

With standard-definition sources upscaling well to the screen's Full HD resolution, my only other concern is the UE55ES8000's picture presets. Basically, they're all pretty poor, leaving the backlight far too high to get the best out of the panel. Even using Samsung's Movie preset leaves dark scenes washed out with areas of backlight inconsistency. It's only when you manually reduce the backlight output to a much lower level – to its 10 setting at most, and ideally as low as six or seven – that colours, black levels and image uniformity suddenly click into place.

Given how many people never change the factory picture settings on their TV, Samsung really does need to come up with at least one preset that's genuinely helpful to serious movie enthusiasts ●

→ Analysis



GUI: The latest Smart Hub looks great and is intuitively laid out, handling an awful lot of options very effectively

Power consumption: We measured between 61W and 80W over a two-minute usage period, with an average figure of 71.5W – very good for such a large, bright screen

Killer feature: The UE55ES800's dual-core processor isn't just for its Smart talents – it reaps performance benefits, too

→ Specifications

3D: YES Active shutter
Full HD: YES 1,920 x 1,080
Tuner: YES Freeview HD, analogue, CI slot
Smart TV: YES Samsung Smart TV
Connections: 4 x HDMI; 1 x component; 1 x D-Sub PC; 1 x Ethernet; 2 x USB ports; digital audio output; built-in Wi-Fi
Sound: 2 x 15W
Dimensions (off stand): 1230.3(w) x 722.3(h)mm x 30.8(d)mm
Weight (off stand): 16.6kg
Features: MicroDimming edge LED system; Motionflow processing; 3D crosstalk reduction; Smart TV features including Fitness zone, Family Story and Kids zone; touchpad remote included; two pairs of 3D glasses included; voice and gesture control systems; integrated webcam with light compensation software; Skype and web browser support; dual-core processor; upgradable with new chipsets as they come online in the future



HCC VERDICT

Samsung UE55ES8000

→ £2,500 Approx

→ Supplier: www.samsung.co.uk

→ Tel: 330 7267864

Highs: Sensational, slimline design; very good 2D and 3D pictures; excellent Smart services

Lows: Gesture system is currently very hard work; provided picture presets are unhelpful; backlight bleed possible unless output is low

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The BD32 is one of the best-looking BD decks around



Universal soldier

With some Blu-ray players selling for £40, Primare's £3,500 disc-spinner needs to do a lot to impress **Richard Stevenson**. And it does

Here's the plot: Take one of the finest off-the-shelf BD players available (Oppo's BDP-93), re-engineer it with custom power supplies, upgraded DACs, dedicated high-end analogue output stages for music playback and then add a much prettier user interface. Take said components, wrap them up in a high-end chassis with stunning build quality and drop dead gorgeous cosmetics. What you then end up with is the £3,500 Primare BD32 universal player.

Of course, Cambridge Audio did something similar with the 751BD,

and you can snaffle one of those for less than £1,000. And in my opinion, if you want the best performing universal disc-spinner on the market and change from a grand, then the 751BD is the obvious choice. That's why I bought one myself. This has allowed me to do a very good A/B comparison between the Cambridge Audio and the Primare – and I am saving up for a Primare, no question.

Extensive tweaks

Primare's tweaking and upgrading is as extensive as it is meticulous. The original Oppo switch mode

AV/CV

PRODUCT:
Audiophile-tuned
networked
Blu-ray player

POSITION:
Primare's only
universal player

PEERS:
Denon
DVD-A1UD;
Pioneer
BDP-LX91;
Cambridge
Audio 751BD

power supply is only used for standby and new dedicated linear supplies are fired up to power digital and analogue circuits when in use. All of the muting and switching circuits are relay-controlled, so every flick of a switch or skip forward in chapters is accompanied by the clicking of relays. The analogue stages have a large capacitor bank to deliver high current on demand and the whole chassis is heavy-gauge steel to aid cooling.

The stereo output circuitry – for CD and SACD playback – uses the flagship Crystal DSD DAC CS4398



chipset in conjunction with Primare's fully-balanced output stage. This feeds phono outputs or fully-balanced XLR connections that promise a vanishingly low noise floor. For those with a high-end DAC already in the kit-rack, the PCM signal from CD or streamed music can be fed out via S/PDIF or top-spec AES/EBU digital connection over XLR. The SACD circuit has its own fully dedicated signal path to further nail its audiophile credentials.

While much of the circuit upgrades concentrate on giving BD32 true high-end audio abilities, even the video board gets a Swedish massage. This now benefits from its own ultra-low-noise linear power supply and improved grounding.

The rest of the features and connectivity are essentially that of the superbly specified Oppo, including 3D playback, dual v1.4 HDMI ports, networking via Ethernet or a supplied Wi-Fi dongle, USB inputs, an e-SATA port and a host of installer features. The home screen gives you access to your uPnP servers for streaming audio, video and pictures, YouTube and Picasa

access and a tantalizing glimpse of US-only services such as Pandora, Blockbuster and VuDu HD – whatever the hell that is...

Colour of money

With all that technology on the inside, the first thing you will actually notice about the BD32 is its sumptuous good looks in either black or titanium. Sat next to the plain-Jane 751BD on my rack the BD32 is a sultry sex symbol. It looks and feels superb, the buttons clunk satisfyingly, and the fascia display is the best I have seen on any AV electronics, period. Not only is it deliciously vivid but can also change it to pretty much any colour you like using individual RGB settings.

The GUI too is equally lush, being rich, colourful, logical and an absolute joy to use. There is none of the 751BD's reticence or often 'thinking about it' pauses and the overall design makes the Oppo's GUI front-end look very dated. The back end set-up screens are ported straight from the Oppo GUI, however.

What lets this player's value proposition down hard is the really

dull remote control. It is a basic bit of plastic with all the relevant buttons and about as inspirational as a cold rice pudding. On a £3,500 player I want a remote control hewn from aluminium (see the Bryston SP3 review on page 24) with buttons that clunk like the airlock on a spaceship. The Cambridge Audio 751BD's metal-topped device is far nicer than the Primare effort and, as there is no App control in sight, you can't switch to smartphone or tablet control either.

Vivid images

Even without getting embroiled in the video processor's extensive user controls, the BD32 fires out a vivid and lifelike picture with very clean shading and great detail. The Marvell Kyoto-G2 video processor driving the primary HDMI 1 output port is quite a revelation if you have not seen it in action – and more than half the reason the Oppo system is so well regarded.

Source Code (BD) uses a stark and saturated look during the scenes on the train to emphasize the alternate reality and the BD32

Remote:
Compared to the player, the handset is a design disaster





Serious sonics:

The Primare's balanced XLR outputs will appeal to high-end audiophiles

delivers it with panache. The chaotic train explosion is richly detailed and colourful, with no noticeable jarring through the swiftly moving scenes that often upset even the best of the rest. Lost within the eye-searing visual splendour of *Despicable Me* in 3D, the BD32 provides the sort of entertainment levels that most commercial cinemas would be proud of.

The video output is at the top of the game but is it an upgrade over the Oppo original or 751BD? If it is, it is subtle. There is perhaps slightly less blocking on smooth graduations when the screen is busy.

'The BD32 provides the sort of entertainment levels that most commercial cinemas would be proud of'

The same is true of multichannel bitstream output over HDMI. It is top-notch; crisp, clean and free of any of the hash that can fatigue the listener during a long movie. The explosive *Source Code* train crash, which you can hear over and over again in the movie with different sound effects every time, is fabulously detailed and dynamic, allowing you to go neighbour-annoying loud with gay abandon. The bitstream output is clearly very accurate and offers incredibly low jitter with a wide range of receivers and processors, getting very close to systems that use proprietary clock-sync connections. That is precisely why I bought a 751BD, so does the BD32 add a great deal to its performance here? Honestly, not a lot.

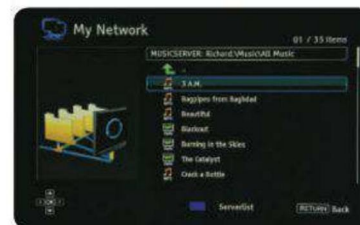
No. Where the Primare really trumps its (admittedly less expensive) rivals is with its musicality. Hook up those phono stereo outputs or, even better, the balanced XLR connections and the BD32 takes on a life of its own. Close your eyes and this player presents music with the sort of articulation and purity afforded by only the very best esoteric CD playback equipment. It is an utterly addictive experience, causing you to begin an endless romp through your CD collection to see just how this guitar solo sounds or how well that bassline rumbles. The sound is refined and polished but lacks nothing in punch and pace when fed rock, pop and dance music. If you have a few SACDs, then go for the stereo option and revel in truly class-leading playback. It's stunning and in a different league to both the Cambridge Audio and Oppo decks.

Dream streamer

You can leverage this performance with network audio. If you have ripped a library in a lossless format or have high-res recordings up to 24bit/192kHz recordings, the Primare BD32 wants to spin 'em. There is an openness and tangible reality to recordings that will leave you breathless and your ears loving you forever. Okay, the music access interface is offers just simplistic file-menus with album art to one side, and annoyingly there is no bit-rate display, but there is no arguing with the fact that this is one of the best-sounding streaming devices on the market today.

Not bad for a highly accomplished 3D Blu-ray player with true audiophile-quality CD playback, too! ●

→Analysis



GUI: Primare's menus benefit from lush graphics and are very responsive

Power consumption: For a BD deck the BD32 is quite power-hungry – we measured an average of 53W when spinning a disc, and 43W just ticking over

Killer feature: The exquisite stereo music performance is where the BD32 justifies its price point

→Specifications

3D: YES
Upscaling: YES to 1080p24
Multiregion: NO Region BD BD; R2 DVD
HDMI: YES 2 x v1.4 outputs
Component: YES 1 output
Multichannel analogue: YES 7.1 output
Digital audio: YES 1 x coaxial; 1 x optical;
 1 x AES/EBU
SACD/DVD-A: YES plays both formats
Dolby True HD/DTS-HD decoding: YES
Dolby True HD/DTS-HD bitstream: YES
Profile 2.0: YES with persistent memory
Dimension: 430(w) x 375 (d)
 x 106(h)mm
Weight: 8.5kg
Features: Audiophile upgrades to power supplies and analogue output stages; balance XLR stereo output; e-SATA port; USB input; network home page; uPnP server access; RS232 port; Marvell Kyoto-G2 processor; chassis-based heat sinking; user adjustable fascia display colour



HCC VERDICT

Primare BD32 → £3,500 Approx
 → Supplier: www.karma-av.co.uk
 → Tel: 01423 358846

Highs: Beautiful build; stunning picture and sound; audiophile music playback; slick interface
Lows: Naff remote control; no bit-rate display; price tag

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

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Sony has ghosts in the machine

John Archer hates crosstalk. Can Sony's latest home cinema projector eradicate the 3D flaw enough to earn it his whole-hearted recommendation?



Sony made it pretty clear during HCC's recent trip to Tokyo that it sees delivering uncompromising quality as the way to get its once-peerless reputation – and sales! – back. With this in mind, the crosstalk that hampered the brand's first 3D projector, the VW90ES, needs to be made a thing of the past. Does the 'sequel' to the VW90ES, the VW95ES, back up this new brand philosophy?

The VW95ES certainly looks like it means business. It's big, heavy, clad in a luxurious high-gloss black finish, and possessed of a large, centrally mounted lens, around which the

bodywork arches seductively to form a vaguely elliptical shape if viewed from the front.

It's adequately connected, too, with its two 3D-capable v1.4 HDMI, D-Sub PC jack, and custom installation-friendly LAN, RS-232 and 12V trigger ports. Personally I wouldn't mind seeing a third HDMI starting to appear on premium projectors, but then I guess that relatively expensive models like this will be installed as part of a wider system that includes an AV receiver with HDMI switching.

In terms of other key specs, beyond the fact that it has Active 3D

AV/CV

PRODUCT:

High-spec Active 3D PJ using Sony's SXRD technology

POSITION:

Currently the pinnacle of Sony's 3D projection range. However, if you've got £18k to spend, Sony's 4k-resolution VW1000ES is imminent

PEERS:

JVC DLA-X30; Epson TW9000

playback (with two pairs of spex included), there's a promising amount of stuff to get your teeth into. One of the most significant developments is the introduction of the same Dynamic Lamp Control technology that did such an effective job of boosting 3D brightness levels with Sony's entry-level 3D projector, the HW30. It works by boosting the light output when the shuttering mechanism in Sony's glasses is open, and reducing it when the shutters are closed, thus making the 3D image look around 25 per cent brighter without using more power.

The VW95ES also employs a 240Hz driving system for its SXRD (Sony's variation on LCoS) chipsets, a fact which experience suggests should prove handy in combatting Active 3D's potential to suffer crosstalk ghosting noise.

The projector's claimed dynamic contrast ratio of 150,000:1 is impressive, too, though a 'mere' 1,000 lumens of brightness makes me relieved that the projector has Dynamic Lamp Control onboard.

Straightforward setup

Setting the VW95ES up is likely straightforward for such a sophisticated beast. For instance, the zoom and focus functions are adjustable via the remote control, and can be fine-tuned with excellent levels of precision. It's got a decent amount of optical zoom (1.6x) to aid its placement in your room, too, and supports both horizontal and vertical image shifting.

As if all this wasn't enough, the VW95ES also benefits from a picture position memory, via which you can set and store separate picture settings for 2.35:1/2.37:1 and standard 16:9-ratio viewing. Movie fans with CinemaScope projection screens will find this functionality very useful indeed – it's a more practical and affordable solution than purchasing a separate anamorphic lens.

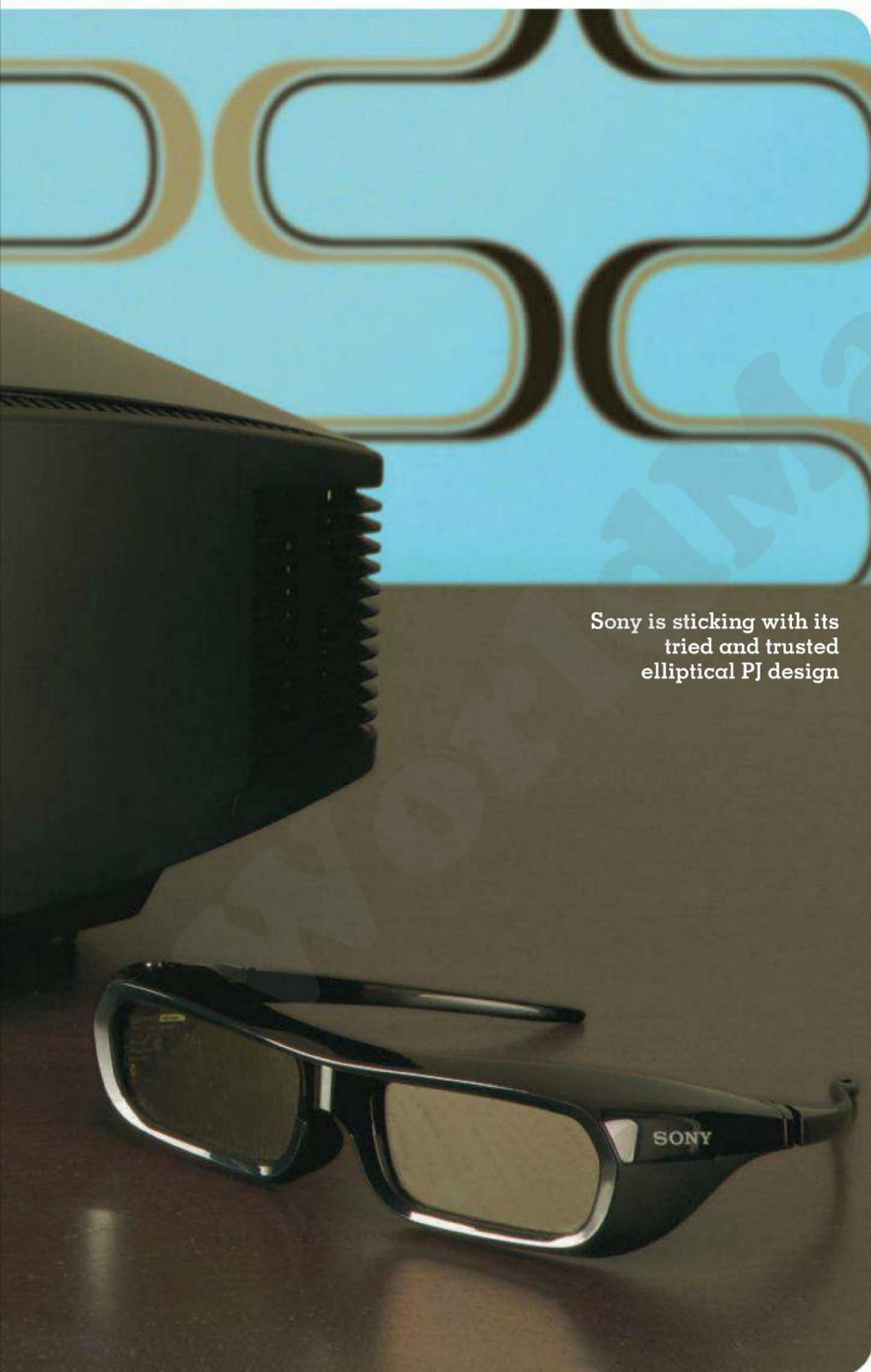
Many of the improvements Sony has brought to the VW95ES's spec sheet compared with the VW90ES appear to have been introduced to boost its 'headline' 3D performance. But as usual, these same improvements also turn out to have a positive impact on the VW95ES's 2D prowess. In fact, they've made its 2D pictures nothing short of outstanding, even by the usually high standards of £5,000 projectors.

The most exceptional enhancement compared with the VW90ES concerns the VW95ES's

Remote: Zoom and focus can be adjusted from here



Sony is sticking with its tried and trusted elliptical PJ design



**Ready to drop:**

A 12V trigger is on hand for automated screen systems

rendering of dark scenes. While they were good on the VW90ES, they look simply stunning on the VW95ES – partly on account of the sheer depth of black level they can plummet, but also because of the levels of greyscale gradation and shadow detail on show. Notoriously tough dark shots, like the opening sequence of the final *Harry Potter...* film, look completely natural, with more or less every nuance of detail and colour tone shift rendered.

'This is an absolutely outstanding 2D projector and a good but not flawless 3D projector'

This is significant because it means the VW95ES shows that Sony's SXRD technology is now capable of achieving a black level response in the same ballpark as that of JVC's new D-ILA projectors.

Admittedly, this is only the case if you use the VW95ES's 'dynamic' contrast mode, via the auto iris, whereas the black levels delivered by JVC's technology are native, with no brightness-adjusting tricks necessary. But Sony's latest iris mechanism is an improvement over previous versions in that it only very occasionally works too aggressively, making the image appear to flicker or look unstable.

With immaculate blacks underpinning its images, the VW95ES also delivers the most natural and rich colours yet seen from SXRD, resulting in a wide, endlessly subtle dynamic range.

The VW95ES also delivers the sharpest HD images I've seen with SXRD, partly as a result of some impressively clean motion handling

– even without using any of the somewhat tricky motion processing options the projector carries. This further boosts the subtlety of colour details to the extent that even 2D pictures look, well, 3D.

Talking of 3D, the VW95ES delivers a very marked improvement over the VW90ES with a selection of my favourite 3D Blu-ray discs. For starters, the VW95ES's pictures suffer much less with crosstalk than those of its predecessor. Second, its 3D pictures look brighter.

However, while these improvements are both sufficiently substantial to make the VW95ES a consistently enjoyable 3D watch, the resulting images are still not quite as immaculate as I want for my £5,000. For while crosstalk is reduced, it's still clearly discernible around the edges of some distant objects.

An adjustment has been provided within the VW95ES's 3D settings that allows you to sacrifice brightness in return for reducing crosstalk. But even using my preferred '-1' setting, there's still a touch of crosstalk to be seen – despite the image being at this point so short of brightness that watching in anything other than a completely blacked out room is pretty much impossible.

A question of cost

What you have in the VW95ES, then, is an absolutely outstanding 2D projector and a good but not flawless 3D projector – and one that runs exceptionally quietly, too. Yet there are quality 3D PJs further down the price ladder, like Epson's TW9000 and JVC's DLA-X30, which deliver superb all-round performances. The VW95ES offers a bit more 2D punch and precision, but there's nothing much in it where 3D is concerned ●

→ Analysis

GUI: The VPL-VW95ES's text-based menus are practical if a little dull

Power consumption: We measured an average consumption of 149W using the Cinema preset

Killer feature: The excellent chassis design does a brilliant job of venting heat from the 200W UHP lamp, so that the PJ runs whisper-quiet

→ Specifications

3D: YES Active shutter

Full HD: YES 1,920 x 1,080

Connections: 2 x HDMI; 1 x component; 1 x D-Sub PC input; 1 x 12V trigger; 1 x RS-232; 1 x LAN

Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Brightness: 1000 Lumens

Contrast ratio: 150,000:1

Dimensions: 470(w) x 179.2(h) x 484.9(d)mm

Weight: 11kg

Features: 11 gamma modes; integrated 3D transmitter; 20dB fan noise; 9 picture presets; 240Hz SXRD drive system; auto iris with multiple settings; motorised lens with 1.6x zoom; vertical and horizontal image shifting; Motionflow processing; two pairs of 3D glasses included; colour management (RCP); IR In controls

**HCC VERDICT**

Sony VPL-VW95ES → £5,000 Approx

→ Supplier: www.sony.co.uk

→ Tel: 0870 6060 456

Highs: Well built and easy to use; runs almost silently in low lamp mode; 2D pictures are fantastic; 3D pictures are good

Lows: Still a little crosstalk with 3D; some rival models make it look expensive

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

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WorldMags.net

Driving down the cost of IPTV

Toshiba has slashed the cost of Smart TV with this networkable 40in LED. **Steve May** gets connected for less

We're increasingly living in a connected world. Last year, 400 of the world's 600 million broadband homes deployed home networking technology. By 2015, upwards of 700 million homes will be running local networks. Small wonder then that TV makers have put the pedal to the metal when it comes to making Smart TVs.

Now IPTV services are fast becoming ubiquitous and even budget flatscreens offer a modicum of DLNA glue. It seems connectability has become the most persuasive upgrade carrot in the TV manufacturer's arsenal.

Toshiba's 40RL858 is proof you no longer have to pay a premium to take home a network-savvy set. This 40in LED LCD typically sells for less than £500.

It may be 2D only, but the set offers access to the brand's online portal Toshiba Places as well as network media streaming (caveats apply). It shares DNA with the brand's more expensive TL models, which add Active Shutter 3D to the feature specification.

Home thinema

The 40RL858 is slim and presentable. Rather unusually, this TV is finished in a light greyish silver rather than uniform gloss black. The bezel is also extremely thin, at

just 11mm. Closer inspection confirms a fairly lightweight plastic chassis though. The remote control is similarly insubstantial, and has all the ergonomic appeal of a partially built Airfix kit.

Connectivity includes three HDMI's (one of which is side-mounted), Scart, component video with stereo audio, Ethernet, PC VGA, optical digital audio and USB. There's also a CI slot and headphone jack. An optional Wi-Fi dongle is available if you're unable to run cable in your viewing room.

The screen is easy enough to navigate. While the user interface is largely utilitarian, there's some graphical icing to jazz things up. Keeping things convenient, a secondary Quick Menu groups the most common controls together. It's this that you'll find yourself using the most.

Crisp pictures

While this RL model doesn't offer Toshiba's lauded Resolution+ picture processing circuitry, it's a capable enough performer. The Full HD panel does the job with Blu-rays and external HD sources such as Sky+HD and VirginMedia TiVo. Images from the set's integrated Freeview HD tuner, while not quite as clear, look considerably better than regulation SD Freeview.

The TV offers a comprehensive variety of aspect ratios, including Dot by Dot (for PC) and Native or multiple stretches (for video); all are accessed via

a graphical button on the remote control. This is worth noting, as out of the box only the Game preset doesn't overscan.

Predictably, straight from the box, the set's defaults fail to flatter. The TV requires intervention to look its best. For starters, sharpness should be dialed back to around -35 on the provided sliding scale, to prevent unnatural edge-emphasis. It's worth noting that even after calibration, this screen looks a good deal less crisp than the brand's impressive UL models.

Contrast is good. While the set crushes blacks in order to improve dynamics, which in turn robs some images of fine shadow detail, noise is low. The use of edge LEDs results in some uneven backlighting, but light pooling in the corners is only really noticeable when viewing 'scope ratio movies.

Motion picture resolution is rated at around 800 lines. An absence of high frame-rate processing means there're no intrusive motion artefacts (typically image ringing and blur) in its pictures; the result is a cinematic looking presentation with discs and TV shows alike.

Unfortunately, absolute colour fidelity eludes this set. Edging back from the zero position default is a move in the right direction. Test footage of a shiny red

Remote: Cheap and not too cheerful – and a silver version would've been a better match



AV/CV

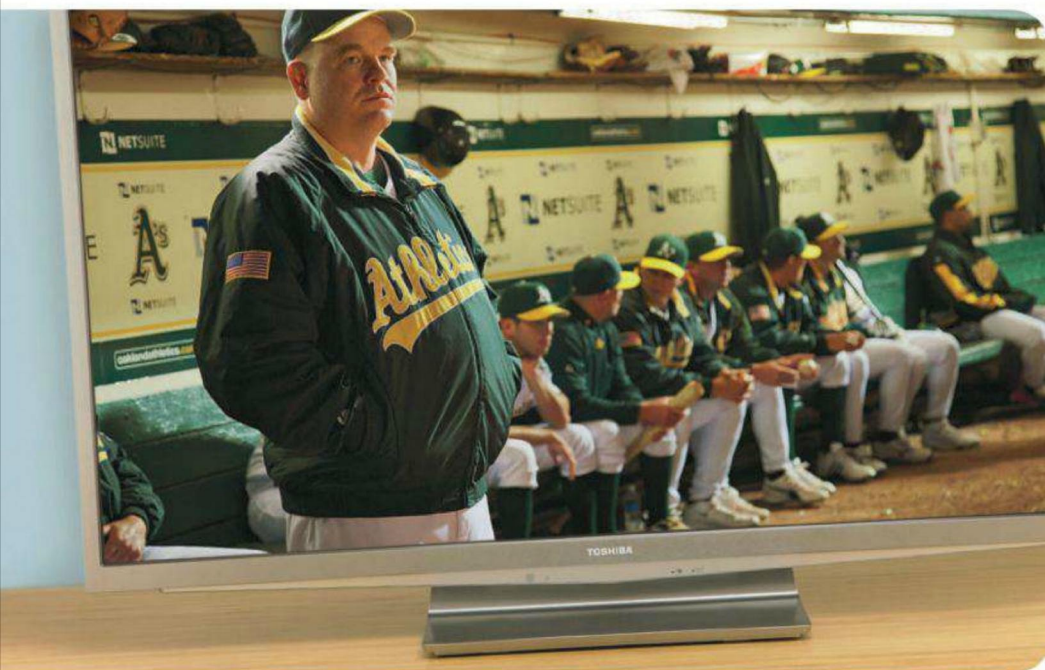
PRODUCT: Affordable Smart LED TV

POSITION: Below Toshiba's TL models which add Active Shutter 3D to the mix

PEERS: Sony KDL-32EX524; Panasonic TX-L37E30

'The 40RL858 is proof
that you no longer have
to pay a premium to take
home a Smart TV'



**Silver sliver:**

Despite the budget price tag, the 40RL858 sports a classy finish

kimono never quite convinces, developing pinkish, purple hues when correction is applied. That said, a sequence of glinting brass instruments, often difficult to do justice to, looks very convincing.

If the screen does have an obvious shortcoming, it's with its audio performance. Reflecting the physical constraints of the set, the 40RL858's sound system is all top and no bottom. There are various presets available, including voice enhancement and dynamic bass boost, but these don't offer any

'Media streaming proves maddening – this TV doesn't stream popular video file containers'

significant improvement. This is a screen you'll want to marry to an external sound system sooner rather than later. The TV does feature Stable Sound though, Toshiba's version of Dolby Volume, designed to maintain a constant level when changing channels.

Maddening media

Pay content outnumbers free when it comes to IPTV on the 40RL858, but at least YouTube and BBC iPlayer are available directly from the Quick menu. For other streaming services, you'll need to log onto Toshiba's Places portal. It's here you'll find the likes of Acetrax, Viewster, DailyMotion, Box Office 365, Woomi, Cartoon Network and HiT

Entertainment. For music fans there's iConcerts and the music service AUPEO! The Places portal also has a social side, reflected by clients for Facebook and Flickr.

Unfortunately, media streaming proves maddening. In Network Media Player mode, this TV doesn't stream popular video file containers, such as MKV and AVI. Across a LAN it prefers to restrict itself to MPEGs. It also has a tendency to hang, becoming unresponsive if it doesn't like the look of your NAS device. When this happens you either have to sit and wait for it to come out of its stupor or reboot by pulling the plug – not something I'd want to do to a telly with any great regularity.

Media compliancy from USB is much better. If you have MP4, AVI, WMV, MKV and MOV files on a stick, they'll play. There's also music support for MP3s, although album art isn't rendered. The USB media player hasn't been completely thought through though; it uses an icon based interface, which lacks the room for full file names – and they don't scroll.

Sheer value

The 40RL858 undoubtedly delivers when it comes to sheer value for money. It's slim, offers an acceptable picture for the price and delivers decent streaming IPTV. If you want a big-ish screen with catch-up from the Beeb and YouTube, it's worth investigating. However, if network media playback is important to you, or higher visual acuity, you should look elsewhere.

→Analysis

GUI: The Places portal opts for a stripped down design – and is therefore a doddle to navigate

Power consumption: We measured an average consumption of 64W during movie playback, which is very efficient

Killer feature: The most appealing aspect of Toshiba's 40RL858 is its £500 price tag – this is serious value of money

→Specifications

3D: NO

HD Ready: YES 1080p/24

Tuner: YES Freeview HD, analogue

Connections: 3 x HDMI;

1 x component; 1 x Ethernet; 1 x Scart;

1 x PC input; 1 x optical digital audio;

1 x headphone; 1 x composite video;

1 x USB

Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Sound: 20W (2 x 10W)

Brightness: 400 cd/m²

Contrast ratio: 3,000,000:1

(dynamic)

Dimensions: 620(w) x 920 (h) x

190(d)mm

Weight: 12.5kg

Features: Edge-LED backlight; USB

for media playback; Toshiba Places

net portal; YouTube, BBC iPlayer &

Flickr; Stable Sound

**HCC VERDICT**

Toshiba 40RL858 → £500 Approx

→ Supplier: www.toshiba.co.uk

→ Tel: 0844 856 0730

Highs: Slim design; Freeview HD; BBC iPlayer; USB media playback

Lows: Average build quality; limited media support across a LAN; thin audio; lacklustre Smart portal

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

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Peter Tysons **Carlisle**
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3D for your desktop

It may look like any other PC monitor, says **Steve May**, but this sleek LG offers Passive 3D thrills plus integrated Freeview

The LG DM2350D is a jack-of-all-trades 3D display. A combination Freeview TV and PC monitor, it's aimed at both 3D gamers and/or those that hanker after a multifunctional screen. While it's not uncommon to find a PC input on regular TVs, this is very much a computer monitor with Freeview bolted-on. You can tell from the design that it hails from LG's IT division, rather than any CE group.

The design is unapologetically desktop, all lightweight gloss plastic. Design wise, Samsung's similar TA950 3D SyncMaster has nothing to fear (but then this LG is considerably cheaper). While the DM2350D lacks Ethernet connectivity, which means you won't be able to use it to access LG's Smart TV portal, it will play back a wide variety of file formats from USB (notably MKV, AVI, MP4, MP3 and JPEG).

The panel sports an anti-glare finish and offers 1,920 x 1,080 resolution with a horizontal/vertical dot pitch of 0.265 mm. While the SD Freeview tuner does it few favours, Blu-rays and PC inputs appear suitably crisp. A large LG remote is included, but there're also front-facing touchpanel controls for close quarter reach.

In TV mode, the set features the standard Freeview Now & Next and eight-day EPG guides. The rest of the user interface recalls the brand's mainstream TV line.

Dynamic snap

Image quality is fine, although you'll need to invest some time with the setup controls for the best results. Black level is adequate for both



SoHo:
LG's 3D monitor is designed for desktop use

gaming and TV viewing, with a dynamic snap to images. Ease back the Sharpness control to avoid edge-ringing, which can become very obvious when you sit close to the screen. Colour fidelity is acceptable, although reds tend to look a tad orange.

Passive 3D's tendency to half the resolution of any incoming 3D signal isn't a particularly big deal on a screen this size. However, its other characteristic, vertical crosstalk, is more of an issue. It's vital you sit square to the screen to avoid the exaggerated ghosting that can result if you're vertically off-axis.

The sound system onboard is loud but unremittingly thin. LG's Surround X mode attempts to add depth to the set's stereo, but its contribution is limited.

Overall, the DM2350D can be considered solid value. A larger 27in model is also available should you need it, but for three-dimensional PC duties 23ins seems an ideal size. Ultimately, I believe any caveats about image quality can be balanced by the bargain price tag.

AV/CV

PRODUCT:
3D PC/TV display

POSITION:
The smaller of LG's two combination Cinema 3D PC and Freeview TV displays

PEERS:
Samsung SyncMaster TA950;
ASUS VG236H

→ Specifications

3D: YES Passive
Full HD: YES 1080p
Tuner: YES Freeview
Connections: YES 2 x HDMI; 1 x USB; 1 x PC input; 1 x headphone
Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080
Sound: 10w (2 x 5W)
Brightness: 250 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 7,000,000:1
Dimensions (w/o stand): 546.7(w) x 354.2 (h) x 58.5(d)mm
Weight (w/o stand): 3.7kg
Features: 3D Ready (one pair of Passive 3D glasses supplied, plus Passive clips-ons for prescription spectacle wearers); 2D-3D conversion; USB media playback (JPEG, MP3, AVI, MKV support); 46W power consumption; anti-glare surface treatment

HCC VERDICT

LG DM2350D → £250 Approx
→ Supplier: www.lg.com/uk
→ Tel: 0844 847 5454

Highs: Low-cost 60Hz 3D PC gaming monitor; solid multimedia USB reader; integrated Freeview
Lows: Passive 3D tech delivers lower resolution than Active Shutter; one-dimensional audio performance

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

P R I M A R E

BD 32: "PICTURE MARVEL"



"...the Primare portrayed BD movies such as Avatar with spectacular picture fidelity...upscaled DVDs looked fabulous too. Playing various concert discs and multichannel DVD-A and SACDs through a friend's 5.1 home cinema rig made him comment that his three-year-old 50in plasma TV had never looked so good, with boldly saturated colours, negligible visible noise and minimal motion artefacts. Nor, it must be said, had he ever heard such rich, deep bass and smooth high frequencies from his cinema system when playing hi-res discs. The BD32 is a class act."

Hi Fi News, February 2012



72 SIM2 NERO 3D-1 → Approx £13,000

Emperor Nero hits Tinseltown

NERO

High-end projector specialist SIM2 has conjured up a 3D projector so good it makes the £13,000 asking price seem like a bargain. **John Archer** reports

So far as I'm concerned, only one home cinema product to date has really and truly nailed the 3D movie experience in the home. SIM2's Lumis 3D-S was essentially perfect, delivering a rich, sharp, detailed, colourful and completely crosstalk-free 3D experience on just the sort of silly-sized, vision-filling screens that seem to be 3D video's natural home.

There was one little problem with the Lumis 3D-S, though: it cost around £30,000. Yikes. You can understand, then, why I'm more than a little flustered today by the arrival in our test rooms of the SIM2 Nero 3D-1: another luxurious SIM2 3D offering, but one which costs 'just' £13,000. Clearly this is still a fair whack above what most of us will be able to afford, but, well, at least it's within aspirational touching distance, right?

Curved bodywork

Despite its relative affordability, the Nero 3D-1 remains a very pretty projector. It lacks the high gloss polished finish of the Lumis, but its slightly rubbery matt black finish is still stylish in its own way. And in all other respects its bodywork is the same as that of the Lumis, meaning you get the same remarkably compact (considering what's inside) chassis and the same Giorgio Revoldini-created curved lines.

Connections are identical, too, with the seemingly obligatory (in the projection world) twin HDMI's being joined by a trio of 12V trigger ports, an RS-232 and a USB for integrating the projector into a home control system.

It's not until you delve deeper into the Nero 3D-1's specifications that it becomes obvious why it's so much cheaper than its Lumis sibling. For while the Lumis is a three-chip DLP model, the Nero is a single-chip model. This means that the projector has to use a spinning colour wheel to produce its colours rather than 'constructing' them from dedicated red, green and blue chips like the Lumis.

This will inevitably cause a deterioration in motion reproduction and video noise, and also raises the potential for stripes of pure red, green and blue to flicker over bright parts of the picture, or when you move your eyes over the image (also known as the rainbow effect). So the main purpose of this review will be to assess just how much of a negative difference these colour-wheel issues make.

Not using a three-chip DLP implementation has a further potentially negative knock on effect, since it prevents the Nero 3D-1 from using the Triple Flash technology that so impressed with the Lumis 3D-S. Triple Flash essentially delivered a 144Hz refresh rate (72Hz to each eye) so that it was pretty much scientifically impossible for 3D images to suffer crosstalk.

Before anyone gets too despondent, though, the Nero still manages 120Hz, which certainly should be fast enough to keep crosstalk under pretty tight control.

Bright star

Elsewhere there are plenty of other good specifications to keep home cinema fans smiling. For instance, the Nero 3D-1's brightness is quoted at 1600 ANSI Lumens – enough, hopefully, for very bright, punchy 3D images. (Although it's worth recalling that the Lumis 3D-S can pump out a phenomenal 3000 ANSI Lumens, providing another very good reason for the Nero 3D-1's much cheaper price).

SIM2 quotes the Nero 3D-1's contrast ratio at more than 10,000:1. On paper I guess this figure doesn't look very exciting when Sony's VW95ES reviewed elsewhere in this issue boasts 150,000:1. But actually, >

AV/CV

PRODUCT: Active 3D DLP projector

POSITION: SIM2's current entry-level 3D projector; the brighter Nero 3D-2 sits above it

PEERS: JVC X90; Sony VPL-VW95ES

The Nero 3D-1's matt black finish should help eliminate any nasty reflections



I've generally found the measured contrast ratios of DLP projectors to be oddly conservative versus the all-important experience of watching them in action.

Furthermore, since the Nero 3D-1 doesn't employ an auto iris like many more affordable projectors (including the Sony VPL-VW95ES), its images will look more stable, as their light level will be constant. It's a pity, perhaps, that you also can't adjust the iris manually like you can on the Lumis, as this would have given you more control over how the Nero 3D-1's pictures look. But including an iris adjustment in an optical array as sophisticated as that used in SIM2's projectors is understandably a tricky business, so if doing without one helps the price stay lower, so be it.

And anyway, it's hardly as if the Nero 3D-1 isn't flexible when it comes to calibration. It can be colour tuned using the same phenomenally comprehensive and accurate Live Colours Calibration 2.0 PC software that the Lumis uses, and so essentially your installer should be

able to tune the picture to within a whisker of colour perfection.

One last feature worth mentioning before checking out how the Nero 3D-1 performs is its ALPHAPATH technology. This proprietary optical path is what enables SIM2 to deliver

'The SIM2 Nero 3D-1's Full HD 3D images come across sensationally detailed, crisp and rich'

so much brightness from such compact devices, and is also responsible for improving the uniformity of the image's illumination.

It's been emotional

No amount of 'dry' talk about the Nero 3D-1's mechanics, though, can prepare you for the emotional response you'll likely to have to its brilliant pictures. Especially if you haven't ever previously seen the mind-blowing Lumis 3D-S in action...

For instance, anyone who's found themselves doubting the worth of

the Active shutter, Full HD 3D approach given the more relaxing experience delivered by Passive 3D will need just a few minutes with 3D Blu-rays like *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, *Tangled*, *Avatar* and *Tron* on the Nero 3D-1 to see what the fuss is about. For the immaculate high-end optical engine inside the Nero, together with its higher-than-normal brightness and an almost complete absence of crosstalk ghosting noise, makes HD 3D images look sensationally detailed, crisp and rich. Seeing so much precision in 3D images on a truly enormous screen – mine is 100in, but the Nero 3D-1 can drive something much bigger – is a simply stunning experience. So much so that it should instantly convert all but the most stubborn of detractors to the 3D cause.

More good news finds the Nero 3D-1 looking flicker-free when watching 3D – so long, at least, as you're doing the sensible thing and watching the projector in a nicely blacked out room.

The precision noted a moment ago doesn't just extend to pixel

One and only: The Nero 3D-1 is a single-chip DLP design, unlike its high-end Lumis cousin

up another few gears, as removing the dimming effect of the shutter glasses allows you to appreciate even more the intensity, dynamism, clarity and richness of the Nero 3D-1's performance.

Without your brain having to take in depth perception, it's also easier in 2D to appreciate how natural the Nero 3D-1's motion handling is compared with almost every other single-chip DLP projector you care to mention.

For the most part, any issues I can raise about the Nero 3D-1 are restricted to ways that it doesn't match up to the Lumis, rather than being 'real' issues given the 3D-1's much lower price point. For instance, 3D images aren't nearly as bright on the 3D-1 as they are on the Lumis, meaning they're less impactful and don't look quite as detailed. Also, while motion is excellent by single-chip DLP standards, it's not as crisp and judder-free as that of its flagship stablemate. Feel free to experiment with the provided PureMovie and PureMotion processing systems in this regard, but personally I didn't particularly like what they did, at least while watching films.

I only have three 'fair' complaints about the Nero 3D-1. Firstly, it runs a touch noisily – although there's nothing that a good installer shouldn't be able to work around; secondly – and this is quite galling, considering how much the PJ costs – the necessary 3D glasses and transmitter aren't included as standard and cost from £750 for a four-glasses/transmitter pack; and that occasionally you can see small traces of the rainbow effect.

Going into more detail on the latter point, black and white footage or shots that contain extremes of contrast can reveal subtle hints of the RGB striping. But it really does only appear under very rare circumstances, and even when it does, it's so low-level that it's almost subliminal.

Scrimp and save

The past few months have seen an explosion in startlingly good and remarkably affordable 3D projectors. But while some of these models – Panasonic's AT5000E, Optoma's HD33, Epson's TW9000 – are undoubtedly brilliant for their money, if you really want to realise the full potential of 3D for the home, it's probably time to dig deeper for a Nero 3D-1. I believe it would be £13,000 very well spent ●

→Analysis

GUI: The setup menus are very detailed and not particularly intuitive
Power consumption: We measured an average consumption of 184W over a two-minute period, with a peak of 200W – this uses more power than other PJs

Killer feature: The Nero 3D-1's 3D performance is simply sublime – free from crosstalk and utterly absorbing

→Specifications

3D: YES Active shutter
Full HD: YES 1080p24
Connections: 2 x HDMI; 1 x component; 1 x D-Sub PC input; 3 x 12V trigger; 1 x USB; 1 x RS-232; 1 x composite video
Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080
Brightness: 1600 Lumens
Contrast ratio: 10,000:1
Dimensions (off stand): 458(w) x 210(h) x 455(d)mm
Weight (off stand): 11kg
Features: Live Colour calibration software compatible; '2.5-flash' technology giving 120Hz 3D refresh rate; single-chip DLP implementation; ALPHAPATH optical technology; PureMovie and PureMotion technology; three lens options available; external transmitter and 3D glasses are an optional extra

detailing. Colours also appear with a much wider dynamic range than you get with more affordable projectors, meaning they appear more natural during stereoscopic viewing than is usually the case. It helps, too, that SIM2 has included a system on the projector that automatically adjusts the colour settings – with great precision – to compensate for the colour shifting introduced by SIM2's 3D glasses.

There appears to be nearly infinite subtlety in the reproduction of colour blends, and dark areas revel in the sort of subtle greyscale detail that you just don't get with less bright, less optically efficient – and obviously, less expensive! – projectors. This is critical, as it allows dark scenes to retain the same sense of depth and space as their brighter counterparts, making the viewing experience more consistent and thus convincing.

2D dazzler

Switching to 2D viewing, the Nero 3D-1 continues to shine. The punch and vibrancy of its pictures shift

Remote: Backlit, so easy to use in a darkened viewing room



HCC VERDICT

SIM2 Nero 3D-1 → £13,000 Approx
→ Supplier: www.anthemavcs.co.uk
→ Tel: 01825 750 858

Highs: Delicious chassis design; 2D and 3D picture quality is awesome; good set of calibration tools

Lows: Rare and subtle appearances of the rainbow effect; runs a tad noisy; UI isn't very intuitive

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

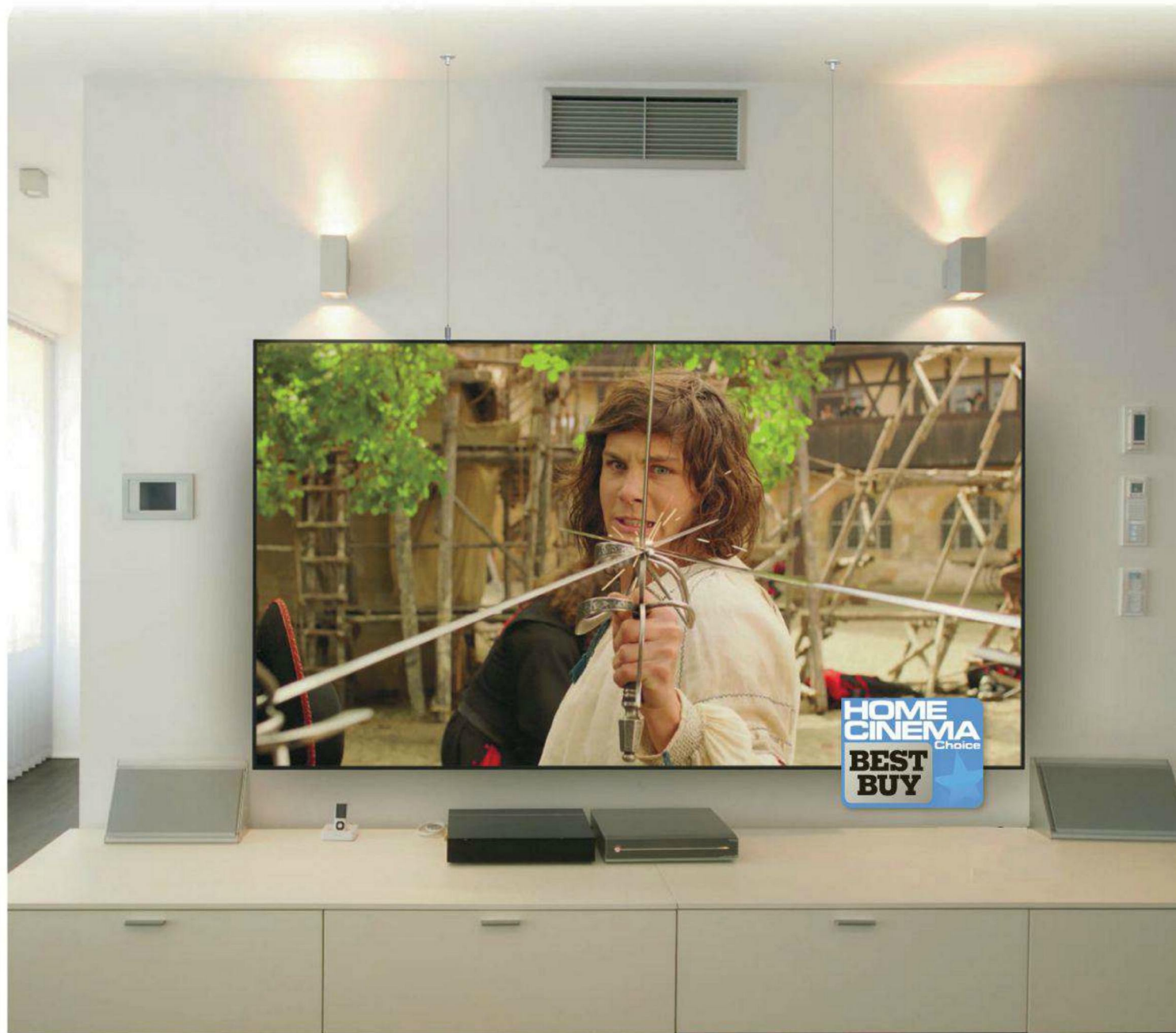
Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Diamond geezer loves the daylight

John Archer enjoys a projection screen that solves the problem of getting a bigscreen experience without compromising your lifestyle



Want a projector screen that looks like a TV? Look no further

WorldMags.net

AV/CV

PRODUCT:

Rigid, small-framed screen designed to be watchable in ambient light

POSITION:

Slightly more expensive than non-frameless Black Diamond versions

PEERS:

None that spring to mind

If you're reading this magazine, chances are you love a big screen.

In fact, for some of you, even 'big' won't cut it. You want MASSIVE. This would be fine, were it not for the fact that going truly massive where video screens are concerned means either spending a fortune on a king-sized plasma TV (such as Panasonic's extraordinary 103-incher), or else trying to accommodate a projection system.

The latter approach is massively more affordable, but demands that you a) find somewhere to hang a big and quite often ugly screen, and b) either convert a spare room into a dedicated home cinema, or live with your everyday living room in perpetual darkness.

Zero to hero

Cue the Black Diamond Zero Edge from Screen Innovations. This clever, startlingly effective product uses a patented – and fiercely guarded! – 'layered' construction to produce a contrast-rich projection screen surface genuinely watchable in daylight conditions. What's more, in place of the chunky frame found around most projection screens, the Zero Edge lives up to its name by sporting barely 1cm of frame. It's also barely 1cm deep, meaning the

also recommended if you're a heavy watcher of 3D.

The 'trick' of the Black Diamond screen is essentially that it's multi-layer structure enables it to better focus the light that hits it from the projector. Try using it in a room with light walls and you will notice that the reflections cast off onto the wall are enormously reduced compared with normal screens, which tend to 'scatter' the light that hits them. In other words, with Black Diamond screens, far more of the projector's light is fired straight back at you, producing a level of intensity that scarcely seems possible at times.

In fact, the latest generation Black Diamond fabric on the Zero Edge is even more potent with its reflectivity than previous iterations, as well as being watchable from wider viewing angles before the image's brightness consistency deteriorates.

The result of all the Zero Edge's innovations is that it delivered an engaging image with all of my test room's lights on – even with some fairly cheap and cheerful projectors. Even with daylight streaming in it served an image of surprising dynamism, colour richness and black level response – sticking two fingers firmly up at the usual laws of projection physics.

To be fair, a plasma screen could deliver brighter, punchier images still. But considering that a Zero Edge costs a mere fraction of what a similarly sized plasma TV would set you back, its results are more than good enough.

Hit the lights!

Don't think from all this that Screen Innovations' Zero Edge is only good in bright rooms. My tests proved that it also functions well in darkened environments, with contrast levels and colour response both remaining very impressive.

There is a catch during low-light viewing, however, in the form of a slight 'glistening' effect over the image. The impact of this can be reduced significantly by lowering the brightness output of your projector, but it might make the Zero Edge problematic for AV enthusiasts wanting to use the screen mostly in darkened conditions. But then the Black Diamond Zero Edge really isn't designed for those sorts of users anyway.

The Zero Edge also struggles if an ambient light source – especially sunlight – hits it from the same

direction as the projector's light beam. So try to avoid this with your room set up if at all possible.

The final flaw I found with the Zero Edge was a noticeable 'hot spot' – a section of the central top portion of the image that looked more sparkly than the rest – if I used it with particularly bright projectors, like SIM2's Nero reviewed in this issue on p72. But again, this can generally be avoided by calming the projector's brightness.

Utterly unique

In fact, provided you work within the limits of the Black Diamond Zero Edge's cutting edge 'technology', and provided its design and light-focusing properties suit your lifestyle needs, then this is an utterly unique, elegantly constructed and genuinely inspired solution to one of home projection's most intractable problems – and it doesn't cost the earth, either.

→ Specifications

Available sizes: Custom-made from 80in to 142in diagonal

Gain options: 2.7 (Silver); 1.4 (Black); 0.8 (Black)

Features: 1cm-wide bezel; 1cm-deep screen depth; mounting options include recessed (unframed); flush-to; projected off the wall; 'flying' from cables

'A unique, elegant and genuinely inspired solution to one of home projection's most intractable problems'

impact on your room is remarkably small for a product which ranges between 80in and 142in diagonally.

You can, suggests Screen Innovations, even make a fashion statement out of your Zero Edge by hanging it via 'flying' wire mounts. Though don't imagine from this that the Zero Edge is light; in fact, while not as heavy as an 80in+ flatpanel, its rigid aluminium 'backplate' introduces some serious heft. On the upside, of course, this backplate also ensures the screen can't bend or warp away from the perfect flatness that's so necessary for a home cinema projection screen.

The fabric finish on the Zero Edge comes in three flavours depending on your needs. There's a 0.8 gain finish for relatively low-lit rooms, the likely most popular 1.4 gain for fairly typical living conditions, and a high 2.7 gain version for very bright environments. The latter option is



HCC VERDICT

Screen Innovations Black Diamond Zero Edge → From £3,000 → Supplier: www.anthemavs.co.uk → 01825 750 858

Highs: Gorgeous, minimalist, rigid design; produces watchable pictures in most ambient light conditions;

Lows: Very bright projectors can cause a 'hot spot'; minor viewing angle issues; slightly sparkly image possible when using it in the dark

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

AV resurrection

Richard Stevenson sent his much-loved Denon A1HD gear off for a internal revamp, but wonders whether the upgrade was worth the money



→ Specifications

Features: 3D video pass-through; simultaneous dual 3D output; Audyssey MultEQ XT32 RoomEQ; Dolby ProLogic IIz; Audyssey DSX; DTS Neo:X; DenonLink 4th Edition; Audyssey Dynamic Volume; faster menus

Reboot: Denon's AVC-A1HD (first reviewed in HCC 158) can now be upgraded for 3D and more

If you own either of Denon's flagship A1HD products, the AVR or the standalone processor, you might be feeling a little left out these days. While these high-end devices still pack a performance punch, their v1.3 HDMI jacks and lack of height/width processing has kept them very much a 2D product in a 3D world. Enter Denon's 3D Edition Upgrade.

This upgrade involves a number of board-swaps and plenty of internal tweekery. The upshot is your AVP-A1HD or AVC-A1HD comes back with 3D video pass-through and Dolby ProLogic IIz, Audyssey DSX and DTS Neo:X to create a 3D soundstage with the use of height or width channels. The Audyssey RoomEQ system gets upgraded to the latest XT32 version, too.

If you're really old school and haven't had the A suffix upgrade, the 3D Edition package also includes DenonLink 4th edition and Audyssey Dynamic Volume. In addition the 3D upgrade promises faster menu navigation, all firmware updates and bug fixes to date and a quick spruce-up and valet inside and out.

For £1,200 your machine is collected by Denon's personal courier service, without the box if you haven't got it, and returns fully fettled in around two weeks. New stickers are placed in key locations, including front flap logos, rear panel

connections and, rather wonkily in my case, over the 'night mode' legend.

The upgrade still only allows 9.3-channel output and not 11.1. There's no way to configure height and width channels simultaneously. I asked Denon's techies about this and they said 11.1-channel would cost over twice as much as the standard 3D upgrade to implement. I still reckon they might have found some takers.

Go faster stripes

In use, the menus are definitely quicker, and even prettier pop-up menus give access to DPL IIz/DSX options. MultEQ XT32 is just as long and tedious to run as it ever was. The machine seamlessly passes 3D content but I have had a couple of incidences of video lock-up when HDMI is fed to both HDMI outputs simultaneously. Height processing is exceptionally good and immediately gives the whole front soundstage extra body and scale. I run with DPL IIz height on by default.

If you have multiple 3D sources and a hankering for height/width channels then the 3D Edition upgrade is worth the outlay. But if you have another way of routing 3D content to your display and seven-channel surround is more than enough, then £1,200 for slightly better room EQ and faster menus looks a bit pricey.

AV/CV

PRODUCT: 3D upgrade for Denon's flagship amp and processor

POSITION: Engineer installed update

PEERS: NAD Master Series modules

HCC VERDICT

Denon 3D Edition Upgrade → £1,200
Approx → Supplier: www.denon.co.uk
→ Tel: 02890 279 830

Highs: 9.3-channel sound; 3D pass-through; improved Audyssey MultEQ XT32 RoomEQ

Lows: No 11.1 option; no height plus width option; some dual HDMI output bugs

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The World's First HD Media Player with Integrated Acetrax and Facebook Support

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Bringing Internet based entertainment to the living room, the ASUS O!Play Mini Plus offers access to a multitude of online services for endless entertainment. The O!Play Mini Plus is versatile with the ability to play content from a PC, smartphone or tablet and even automatically play files from a connected USB drive.

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SCAN

Making good use of your walls

After a bit of careful EQ, **Adam Rayner** gets the best out of this designer set of high-tech on-wall speakers from US brand Revel



AV/CV**PRODUCT:**

High-end 5.1 to match your flatscreen TV

POSITION:

Just one part of Revel's wide-ranging speaker lineup

PEERS:

KEF T305;
Monitor Audio
Radius R270HD
AV12;
Tannoy Arena
Highline 500

People in the home cinema industry – manufacturers, PRs and the like – know me for being keen on mad, huge potent audio. Giant 18in subwoofers and speakers the size of Stonehenge. I think they sometimes forget that I am also impressed by the delicate and the clever. So much so, that with this set of skinny tower-style speakers, all housed in an aluminium toothpaste-tube squeezed-out extrusion, I could feel palpable fear from the PR chap as he kept on politely enquiring how I was 'getting on' with the Revel Concerta speaker system.

Designed to be used on-wall, hence the OW (On Wall) name, they are sold with solid two-piece steel wall brackets that afford a thirty-degree slant up or down (or inwards) from the flat-to-the-wall bracket mounting plate. The centre also comes with a small, plastic injection-moulded stand for better aiming the output at the listeners.

I had the Concerta M10 left/rights, C10 centre and the M8 as rears. The front baffles and end pieces are a big piece of the story, and are all about housing the high-tech tweeters in small horn-like waveguides for improved dispersion

– and, in the case of the left and right speakers, making sure they are at the right height for your ears. For as well as the full-length wall brackets, the M10 speakers are supplied with a triple-choice of heights from their stands. This is by use of one of the three pieces of threaded extrusion, also finished in the same sexy fine-brushed anodised black.

If you want your M10s to look like towers, then £200 a side will get you the STANDM10 product, which is a substantial base with a long section of the same extrusion and bolts that reach all the way through it, to secure the enclosure to the stand. There's even an aluminium billet-turned locating peg to spanner into the stand, used to keep the union between the stand and the speaker utterly rigid.

Dressed to compress

The speaker drivers are improbably clever. Called MCC, or Micro Ceramic Composite, they use a deep anodised finish on both sides of an aluminium core and, just like Acoustic Energy, Revel knows this reduces power compression effects and sounds brilliant, as such a speaker cone acts as a rigid piston. This is especially vital as they are all but 3in wide, bar the smaller tweeter, which is made of the same stuff.

Amazingly, the tremendously cunning subwoofer has a whacking 12in driver in it that is also of the same ilk, and it works deep and rich and even. It also packs a built-in wireless receiver, so if you plug the optional sender unit in at the front end, you need not run a phono cable around to your woofer. This makes placement much easier, limiting you only to where your room's plug sockets are.

There are two pairs of the stumpy 3in drivers in the M10 and C10, which is just the former on its side wearing its badge wonky. There are just two of these drivers in the shorter M8, yet both the specs for the M8 and the C10 and M10 claim they will play only -3dB at 110Hz, which is quite a thing to say.

The subwoofer has a single channel of parametric EQ fitted to it, or rather Parametric CUT, as there is no +/-, rather just up to a berserk 14dB of attenuation. You have to know what frequency and how widely to affect the frequencies around your chosen attenuation point (Q factor) to set it correctly. This can take a Real Time Analyser



Speakers that will match your flatscreen TV...



Cut the cable:

Add an optional Wi-Fi sender to the sub to enjoy its wireless delights

(RTA) or PC and a considerable amount of faffing around.

But I am an ex-live sound engineer and I have seen three different auto-EQ systems' analysis of my living room. So, after a week of leaving the system simply chugging away a bit with my telly, I finally dived in and gave it some effort on the setting of the EQ, making a pretty fat cut around 63Hz by a good slice of -9dB, right in my problem zone.

Beefy bottom end

And finally, I 'got' the system and realised Revel's PR boy didn't have a thing to worry about.

'Revel's on-wall speakers offer a lovely, clean sound, with great accuracy and even some scale'

Because, just like systems by the likes of Bose, this set by necessity has to use the weight of a well-tuned subwoofer to give some scale and mass to the whole sound, let alone the deep stuff. It's an odd effect but is all about how subwoofers tighten your whole soundstage, not just the bottom end.

Up until I had bothered to tune the woofer, I hadn't really got much of a good impression. But I now gave it some serious listening, and, under drive with some real wattage, those tiny wee aluminium midrange drivers and tweeters really came to life.

I put some music on first, multichannel and jazzy. The *pock* of a rimshot on a snare drum impressed, while the detail of a brushed cymbal sussurated in the rears. There were rich sweet reverberations and horns with a lovely dirty honky edge, the original reed and rasp coming through. It was unbelievable quality from 3in drivers. Like Formula One engines: low capacity but revving their nuts off to make massive power.

The subwoofer was immense in output. It had to work and pump with such vigour – no passive driver here – to just support the system, but did so without any telltale over-excited-cabinet wobbling. My EQ cut worked well, the rest could pump, and ultimately the speakers, skinny though they were, did that lovely thing when they disappear, the soundfield being all you care about. With *Paul* on Blu-ray [*Again?* - Ed] on my new Panasonic BD/HDD PVR, I was lost in the night-time desert opening sequence, marvelling at the crackle of a sucked-on cigarette.

Skinny winners

The whole of the Revel Concerta On Wall system benefits from the lack of power compression inherent in the cone technology. You get a lovely sound, great accuracy and even some scale. You'll need a strong amp to really drive them well, but if you're hunting for speakers that don't look like dogs' coffins but still deliver the goods, then I recommend you check them out ●

→ Specifications

Revel Concerta M10

Drive Units: 2 x 3in Micro Ceramic Composite (MCC) woofers; 2 x 3in MCC midrange drivers; 1 x 1in MCC dome tweeter housed in Constant Acoustic Impedance waveguide
Enclosure: Two-and-a-half-way with dual front-firing ports
Frequency Response: 110Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity: 89dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 150W
Dimensions: 107(w) x 582(h) x 113(d)mm
Weight: 3.1Kg

Revel Concerta C10

Drive Units: 2 x 3in Micro Ceramic Composite (MCC) woofers; 2 x 3in MCC midrange drivers; 1 x 1in MCC dome tweeter
Enclosure: Two-and-a-half-way with dual front-firing ports
Frequency Response: 110Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity: 89dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 150W
Dimensions: 582(w) x 107(h) x 113(d)mm
Weight: 3.1Kg

Revel Concerta M8

Drive Units: 2 x 3in MCC woofers; 1 x 1in MCC dome tweeter
Enclosure: Two-way, front ported
Frequency Response: 110Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity: 88dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 125W
Dimensions: 107(w) x 296(h) x 113(d)mm
Weight: 1.6Kg

Revel B120

Drive Unit: 1 x 12in MCC woofer
Enclosure: Down-firing, floor-loaded port with front-firing driver
Frequency Response: -3dB @36Hz (-6dB @ 32Hz) to crossover
On board power: 250W RMS
Dimensions: 400(w) x 450(h) x 356(d)mm
Weight: 23.2Kg
Connections: Phono input in stereo as well as single LFE phono socket



HCC VERDICT

Revel Concerta On Wall Series → £3,400 Approx → Supplier: www.karma-av.co.uk → Tel: 01423 358846

Highs: Smooth powerful audio with great imagery; designed to match your flatscreen
Lows: Need to be run like thoroughbreds; sub requires a serious RTA for EQ setting

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



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Mighty miniatures

Danny Phillips eschews true surround sound to take Boston Acoustics' style-conscious 2.1 offering for a spin

Multi-tasker:

Boston Acoustics' 2.1 system also streams via Bluetooth



Boston Acoustics' latest effort is not your average 2.1 system. In fact, it's hard to say exactly what product category it fits into. Because, as well as providing enhanced stereo playback of movie/TV fare, it also offers built-in Bluetooth, letting you stream music wirelessly from a PC or other gizmo, courtesy of full amplification for the satellite speakers as well as the sub.

The SoundWare XS Digital Cinema flaunts compact dimensions. The two satellites are just 108mm high and styled in gorgeous multi-sided, gloss black enclosures, making them some of the most chic and distinctive sats on the market. There's a gloss white option, too, if black's not disco enough for you.

Build quality is good, with a similar weightiness to that of KEF's KHT1505 or Cambridge Audio's Minx. On the back are sturdy metal springclips and a groove to keep cables tidy. The sub's not ugly, either – small, sturdy and housed in a pleasant matte-finished cabinet, it's the epitome of living-room friendly.

The sub houses the connections, including optical digital audio, analogue stereo and 3.5mm minijack inputs, plus a Dolby Digital decoder and a claimed peak power of 250W. Built-in Dolby Digital decoding

means you can rig up a BD or DVD deck directly to the optical input and enjoy discreet three-channel sound.

The system comes with an IR receiver called the Control Pod, which plugs into the back of the subwoofer, and a tiny remote control. That means you can hide the sub away and place the Control Pod next to your TV, allowing you to adjust the volume or change sound modes. Red, green and blue LEDs indicate the input, sound mode and power status.

Refined audio

These dinky speakers produce a fulsome and dynamic sound. It's punchy and powerful, yet with a level of refinement at play that'll be a revelation to anyone raised on the tinny sound of TV speakers. During the Frost Giants battle scene in *Thor*, the Boston system bashes out the brutal effects with delicious energy, but at no point do the high-pitched sounds of splintering rocks sound thin or abrasive. I won't pretend I didn't miss the rear-room envelopment, though, and the Movie preset brings little to the table.

This sound quality, along with its Bluetooth function and gorgeous styling, makes the SoundWare XS Digital Cinema easy to recommend ●

→ Specifications

Satellites

Drive units: 1 x 2.5in woofer; 1 x 0.5in tweeter
Frequency response: 39Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity: 85dB
Power handling: 10-100W
Dimensions: 113(w) x 108(h) x 94(d)mm
Weight: 0.5kg

Subwoofer

Drive units: 1 x 8in
Frequency response: 39Hz-180Hz
On board power: 250W
Dimensions: 240(w) x 251(h) x 288(d)mm
Weight: 5kg
Connections: Optical digital; 3.5mm minijack; analogue stereo

AV/CV

PRODUCT:

Compact 2.1-channel system with Bluetooth music streaming

POSITION:

Part of Boston's 'TV Sound' range with TVEe soundbars

PEERS:

Harman Kardon BDS 470; Samsung HT-D7200

HCC VERDICT

Boston SoundWare XS Digital Cinema → £400 Approx → Supplier: www.bostonacoustics.eu

Highs: Sparkling sound; Bluetooth streaming; cute design
Lows: Toothless Movie mode; no HD audio decoding

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Always a Pioneer

The new SC-LX85 AV receiver is a triumph in audio innovation and offers studio quality sound, stunning HD video and versatile connectivity and control.

Technical excellence guaranteed

The AIR Studios logo on a Pioneer product is the result of a partnership in design and development since the prototype stage.

www.airstudios.com/technical/pioneer.aspx



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Three-channel 3D

Harman/Kardon has added 3D playback to its designer home theatre gear.

Adrian Justins wonders if that's enough to compete in a crowded market

With a turnover exceeding \$4bn and a portfolio of brands that includes AKG, JBL, Infinity, Lexicon and Mark Levinson, Harman is not exactly small potatoes in the deep fat fryer of consumer electronics. But in this part of the market – all-in-one systems – its Harman/Kardon sub-brand has to compete against

the AV giants of Samsung, LG, Panasonic and Sony. And because it can't match those box-shifters on price or features, it needs to out-do them in performance and desirability.

This BDS 470 is just one of a new six-strong lineup of all-in-ones based around the 3D-capable BDS 270 player/receiver. The BDS 470 marries the three-channel BDS 270 with the HKTS 200 speaker package, itself comprised of two HKTS TS60 satellites and the powered HKTS 200SUB subwoofer. Other configurations are available; for surround sound you have to migrate towards packages based on the six-channel BDS 570 player/receiver. You can also opt simply for the £600 BDS 270 or £750 BDS 570 and add your own speakers.

The design of the main unit is compact and minimalist, apparently in part to satisfy the demands of mothers who are fed up with children randomly pressing the buttons of home entertainment gear with sticky fingers. The fascia is adorned by a disc slot (no breakable tray here), two-tier LED display, volume knob, USB input and headphone jack. There are still power and eject buttons on the top for keener kids to seek out, but overall it's a very smart,

solid piece of kit. The connections on the rear are of equally high quality, including gold-plated, full-size binding post speaker terminals.

The provision of three HDMI inputs is ample, complemented by an ARC-equipped HDMI output.

It's a sign of the times that 3D playback has been added to the range but anyone looking for internet TV and networking features faces disappointment. Multimedia functionality extends to playback of files stored on a USB drive. That and HK's 'The Bridge' iPod dock interface.

Speakers with history

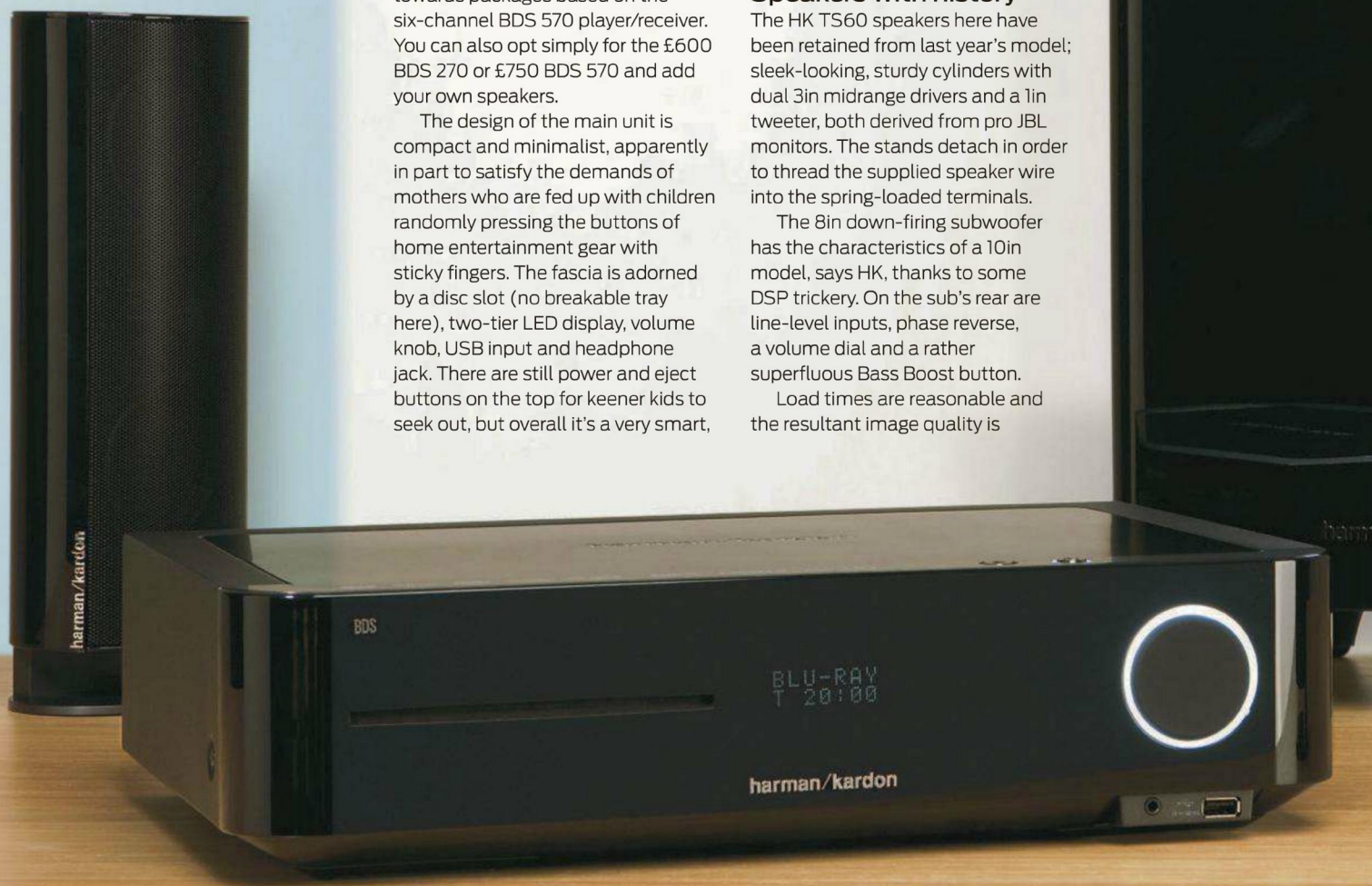
The HK TS60 speakers here have been retained from last year's model; sleek-looking, sturdy cylinders with dual 3in midrange drivers and a 1in tweeter, both derived from pro JBL monitors. The stands detach in order to thread the supplied speaker wire into the spring-loaded terminals.

The 8in down-firing subwoofer has the characteristics of a 10in model, says HK, thanks to some DSP trickery. On the sub's rear are line-level inputs, phase reverse, a volume dial and a rather superfluous Bass Boost button.

Load times are reasonable and the resultant image quality is

Good-looking:

The BDS 470 offers a chic design and premium build quality



Remote: Nicely balanced, reassuringly solid and responsive – but not backlit

AV/CV

PRODUCT: All-in-one 2.1 Blu-ray home cinema system

POSITION: One of six options based on similar specs

PEERS: Sony BDV-L600; Panasonic SC-BTT262; Bose Lifestyle 235

excellent. *Avatar* (2D and 3D) on Blu-ray is reproduced with all the eye-popping clarity I've come to expect, looking as dynamic and vigorous as ever. Colours are accurate and skin tones realistic. Standard-def DVDs aren't upscaled but in the hands of a decent screen my old fave *The Long Good Friday* looks clear and robust.

Audio-wise, the challenge for the BDS 470 is to serve up a convincing soundstage from just three speakers with two processing options: stereo and Dolby virtual surround. The latter is noticeably fuller but in no way an approximation of genuine 5.1. For what it is though, the results are excellent. *Monsters Vs Aliens* (BD) has some cleverly crafted disparate effects that are delivered with effortless impact by the satellites. These blend perfectly with low-end



rumbles and crashes from the size-defying subwoofer. Dialogue is equally well handled, proving the system's suitability for use both with movie soundtracks and everyday TV viewing.

The system also does a sterling job with music. A DTS-HD live recording of Talking Heads' performing *Life During Wartime* has astonishing punch and lucidity, while a 1509Kbps DTS-HD recording of Mozart's *Violin Concerto No 4 in D Major* by Marianne Thorsen

is simply exquisite.

Overall, Harman/Kardon's BDS 470 is more than just a design statement. Its assured performance means it firmly deserves a place in the higher echelon of 2.1 systems. I expect the 5.1 version to be even more impressive ●

→Analysis

GUI: HK's onscreen display features crisp HD graphics and a logical layout
Power consumption: We measured an average power consumption of 55W – but remember the subwoofer will add to this. Standby measured 1W
Killer feature: The trio of HDMI inputs means the BDS 470 can be used with plenty of other sources

→Specifications

3D: YES

Upscaling: NO

Multiregion: NO Region B BD, R2 DVD

Connections: 3-in, 1-out HDMI with

ARC; 1 x component video; 1 x Ethernet (BD-Live only); 2 x optical digital audio input; 1 x coaxial digital audio input; 1 x sub output; 1 x sub trigger connector; 1 x remote IR in; 2 x stereo phono inputs; 1 x stereo phono output; The Bridge (iPod dock) connector; FM antenna; 1 x USB; 1 x headphone jack

SACD/DVD-A playback: NO/NO

DTS-HD/DolbyTrueHD decoding: YES/YES

Profile 2.0: YES additional storage required for BD Live

Claimed power output: 2 x 65W

Dimensions (main unit): 102(h) x 401(w) x 260(d)mm

Weight (main unit): 6.4 kg

Features: 8in active sub with 200W power; 2 x 75mm mid-range drivers, 1 x 25mm tweeter; playback of DVD+R/-RW, DVD-R/-RW, audio CD, CD-R/RW discs; USB flash memory playback (FAT32 only); JPEG, GIF, PNG, MP3, WMA, AAC, AVI, AVCHD, MPEG-1 (layer 1); MPEG-2; DivX and XviD file support



HCC VERDICT

Harman/Kardon BDS 470
 £650 Approx → Supplier:
 uk.harmankardon.com
 → Tel: 01707 278 113

Highs: Stylish design; effortless audio performance; attractive menu system; decent connectivity
Lows: Illegible buttons on remote control; basic multimedia features; unconvincing pseudo surround

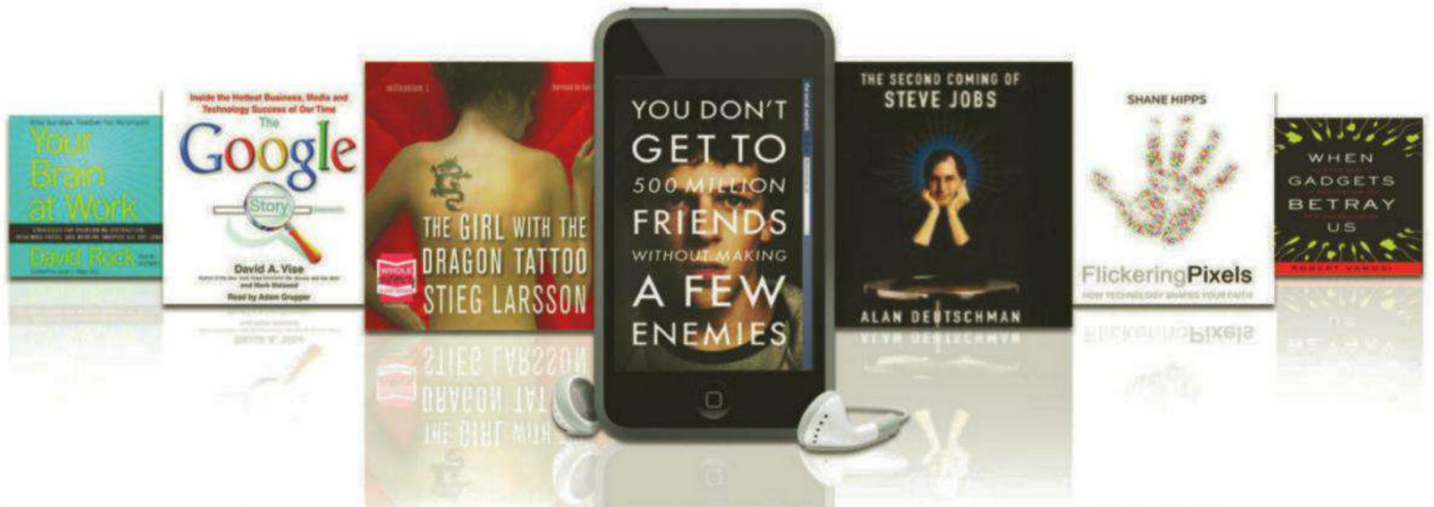
Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

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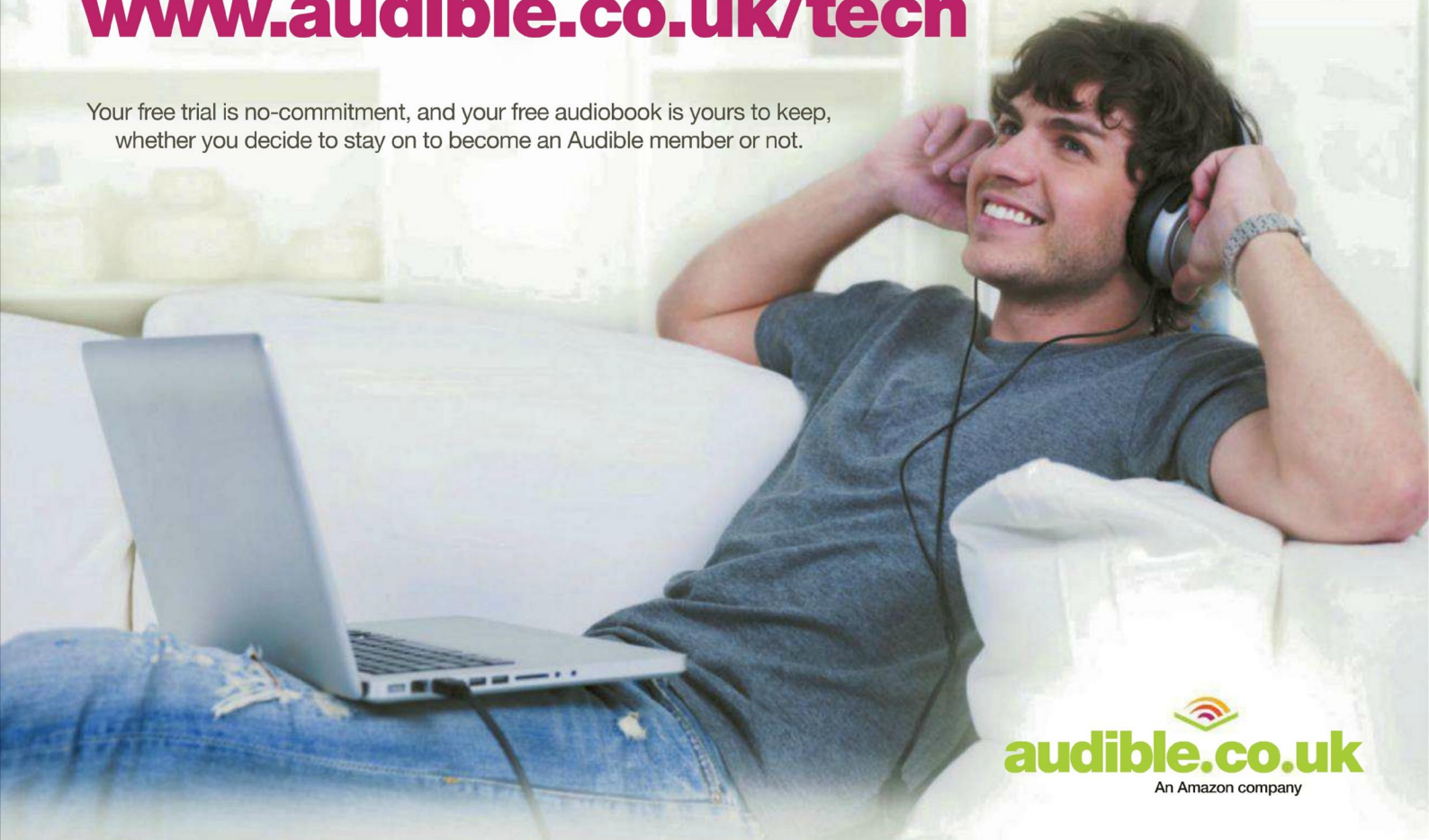


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Making the sweet spot sweeter

Danny Phillips reacquaints himself with Orbitsound's 'spatial sound' tech

Orbitsound is a relatively new company with only one thing on its mind – making speakers. Its product range runs to soundbars and iPod speakers. And that's it. With that in mind, you'd expect its T12v3 soundbar and sub combo to be more than a match for rival products from brands with other things on their minds.

As the name suggests, this the third generation of T12. Tweaks this time around include higher quality components in the main soundbar unit and newly-designed subwoofer, but the styling hasn't changed a jot.

Pros

- Orbitsound's unique 'spatial sound technology' proves to be more than just PR twaddle. The internal alignment of the eight drivers results in a widely dispersed stereo image, with much less of a 'sweet spot' than I expect from a 'bar. This gives it a

clear advantage over your flatscreen's speakers, and makes it a commendable partner for your music collection.

- The £300 ticket gets you a reassuring build quality, and the gloss black design shouldn't upset too many interior decorators.
- The top-mounted iPod/iPhone dock is a welcome bonus. iPods can also be controlled by the supplied remote.

Cons

- Those with Blu-ray players will rue the lack of an HDMI input – Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD soundtracks are therefore a no go. You'll have to make do with the optical and coaxial digital audio connections, and analogue stereo jacks.
- The subwoofer doesn't like being put under too much strain – push the T12v3 to its upper limits and the low-end can sound undefined.



Good for Pod people:
The T12v3 soundbar can dock your iPod, too

HCC VERDICT

Orbitsound T12v3
£300 Approx

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

PHILIPS NP3700 → £200 Approx → www.philips.co.uk

Take control of your tunes

Want a stylish music streamer? **Danny Phillips** has found one

Philips has taken time out from making feature-rich TVs to grab a slice of the growing music streamer market, bring some considerable design flair to the party. The Wi-Fi enabled NP3700 picks off tunes from devices on your network (or from 'net radio services and Napster) and pumps them out of its built-in stereo speakers.

Pros

- As well as a sturdy construction, Philips has endowed its music streamer with an

insufferably cool full-colour touchscreen controller (unremovable, unfortunately). This is user-friendly and responsive, displaying album art when available..

- If you don't run a Wi-Fi network, the NP3700 features an Ethernet jack. There's also a 3.5mm jack for MP3 players.

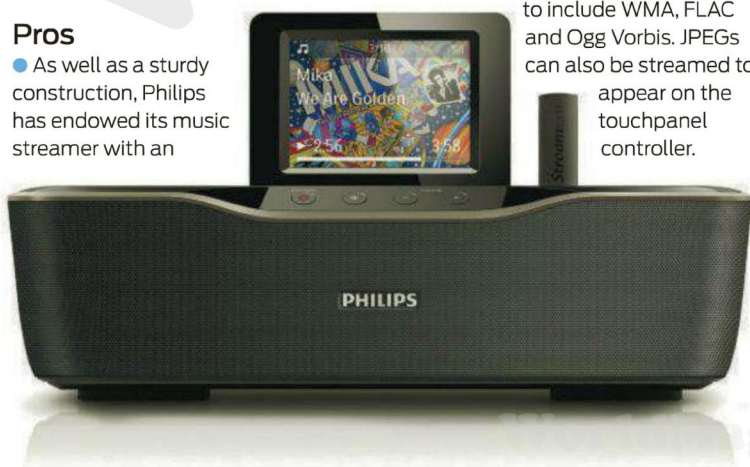
- File support extends beyond MP3 to include WMA, FLAC and Ogg Vorbis. JPEGs can also be streamed to appear on the touchpanel controller.

- Setup is aided by the device automatically searching for your Wi-Fi router. Streaming, at least in my experience, was glitch free.

- It's compatible with Philips' MyRemote app (for Android/iPhone and iPod touch).

Cons

- The NP3700 doesn't offer a USB input, which would have been a sure-fire way to add to its flexibility.
- While the sound quality is acceptable for everyday use (crisp, clear and with a surprising bottom end), the 2 x 5W amplification means it may be found lacking when you're throwing a house party.



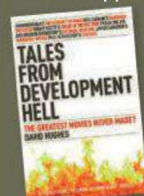
HCC VERDICT

Philips NP3700
£200 Approx

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

In Brief

Tales from Development Hell
David Hughes
£10 Approx



This endlessly readable tome updates the author's original account of films that were either never made or went through numerous rewrites. New chapters deal with attempted remakes of *Fantastic Voyage* and Hughes' own experiences of Hollywood scriptwriting.

1 2 3 4 5

Finishing touches

Adrian Justins trawls the shelves for those must-have home cinema extras

NAD VISO 1

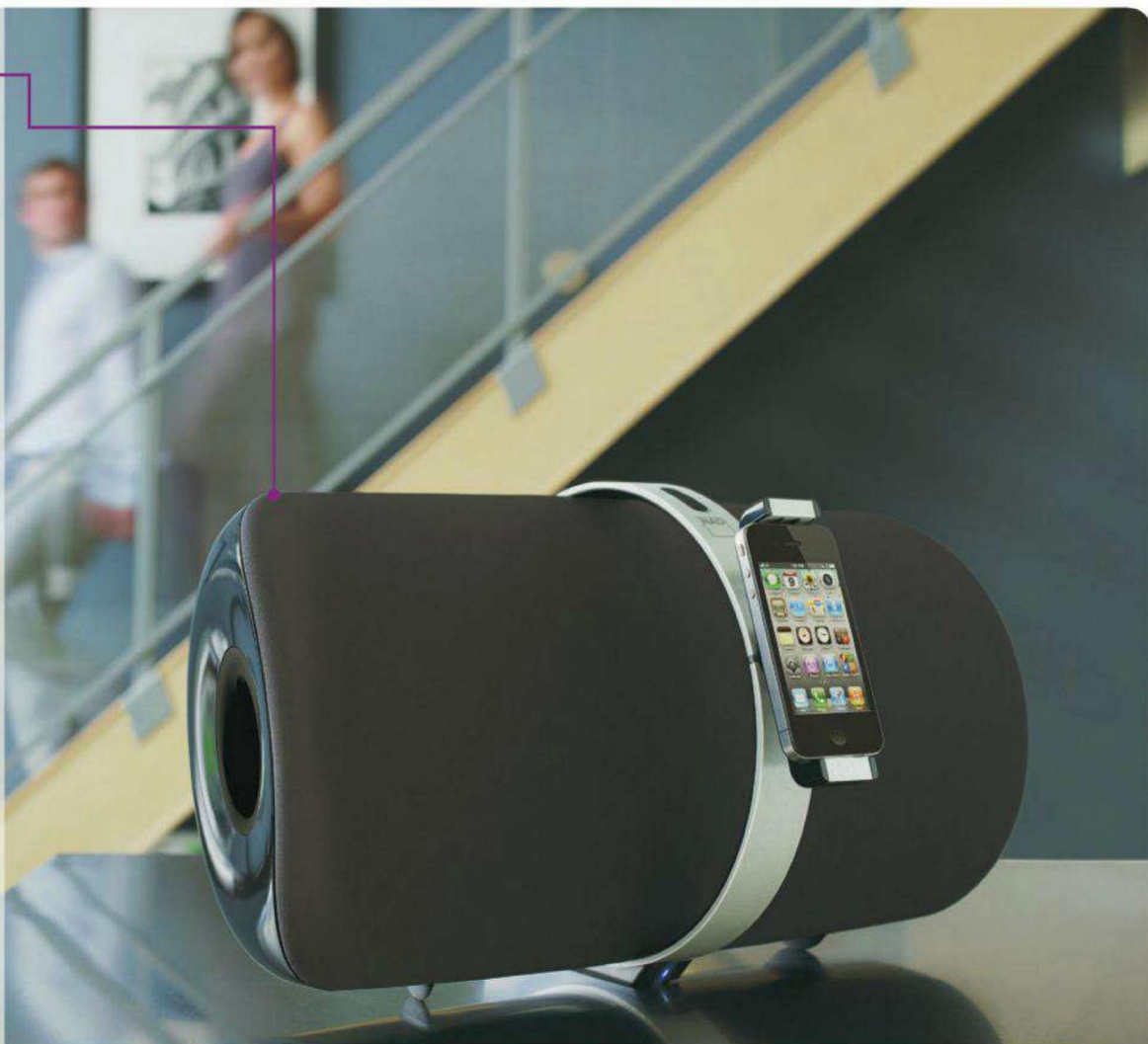
Approx £500

Borrowing heavily from B&W's well-regarded Zeppelin in terms of its design, albeit with squared-off ends, NAD's VISO 1 has an iPod dock mounting ring and uses Bluetooth to connect wirelessly to iPads and other tablets and smartphones. Furthermore, a digital optical input offers compatibility with devices such as PVRs, media streamers and screens, as well as sources delivering high-bitrate audio files up to 24bit/96kHz. Completing the connectivity picture is a component video output for watching iPod video images on a screen whilst listening to the sound through the dock. The cradle rotates, allowing a mounted iPod or iPhone to be used vertically or horizontally, which is handy for enjoying iTunes' Cover Flow. The system features a 6in subwoofer plus dual 2.75in drivers, each one driven by a digital amp.

nadelectronics.com

HCC VERDICT

Serious docking solution



LOEWE AIR SPEAKER

Approx £650

There's definitely something in the 'air' this month as Apple's AirPlay lands on this smart-looking box from Loewe. AirPlay streams from your computer's iTunes library to any number of connected devices and it lets you use an iDevice to control device-stored music services, such as Spotify.

Available in black or silver with a choice of top-mounted insets, Loewe's speaker comprises two subwoofers, two tweeters and two midrange speakers with a total power output of 80W. A 'wake' feature ensures the speaker is always on standby for a speedy return to duty.

www.loewe-uk.com

HCC VERDICT

AirPlay beats Bluetooth for quality and distance





HAUPPAUGE MYTV 2GO

Approx £200

MyTV 2GO features a Freeview TV tuner with wi-fi functionality, enabling it to receive TV signals and transmit them over 802.11b/g to an iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch or wireless-ready computer. Powered by a rechargeable battery, the unit is intended for mobile viewing wherever there's a Freeview signal and makes it possible to watch TV on the go without using up mobile data allowances.

A downloadable iTunes app allows mobile devices to watch, pause, rewind and record live TV. The unit weighs 70g and is charged from a USB socket to give 3.5 hours of use.

www.hauppauge.co.uk

HCC VERDICT

Makes the almost identical £150 Elgato Tivizen seem better value

PLEXTOR PX-650US PLEXEASY

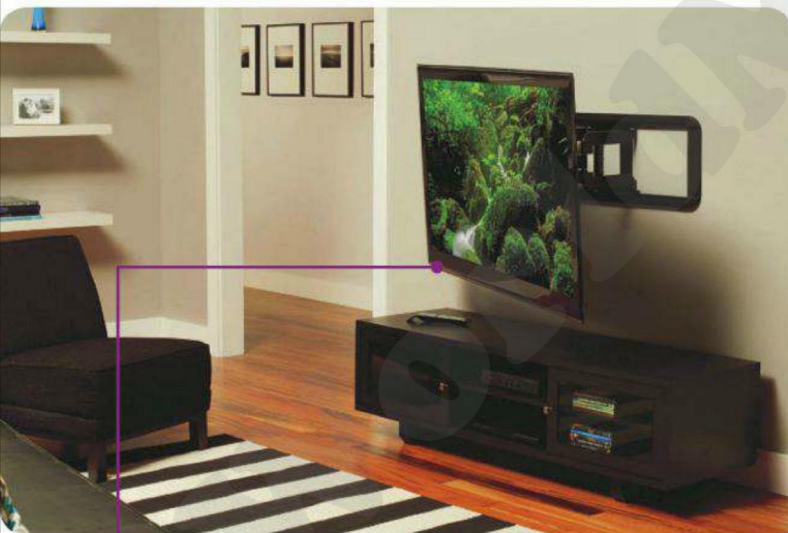
Approx £TBC

We need to talk about backing up. Okay, it's hardly dinner party conversation material but the simple rule is you should never have just one copy of precious digital memories (photos and video) and music. This device integrates an 8x DVD writer, SD card reader and USB port and is designed to make it a cinch to backup by taking the computer out of the equation. Users can transfer videos, music and other data from an external device to DVD or from an SD card directly onto another external storage device.

When connecting the source device, the PlexEasy, which is due on sale soon, will automatically suggest a suitable destination medium to transfer files to. The unit is controlled by the buttons on top and has an LCD window that shows the progress of a transfer. www.plextor-digital.com

HCC VERDICT

Clever and surprisingly useful



SANUS SUPER SLIM TV WALL MOUNTS

From Approx £250

It's no good forking out for a size-zero skinny screen TV and ruining the effect with a clunky wall mount. Sanus's latest solution is the versatile VLF320. With a profile measurement of just 31mm, it lets screens between 37in and 84in hang close to the wall, just like a picture. The mount is designed for quick installation and ease of use providing up to 500mm

of extension from the wall, plus tilt and swivel at the touch of a finger. Post-installation levelling adjustments are simple to effect whilst an integrated cable management system conceals cables within the mount's extension arm. Decorative covers are included to conceal the mounting hardware and provide what interior designers call 'a finished look'.

At £200, the slightly cheaper and more basic VMF322 is intended for screens between 26in and 47in. It lacks the decorative covers and post-install levelling ability of the VLF320 and has a profile of 35mm. www.sanus.com/eu/en

HCC VERDICT

It's the fingertip control really stands out

Clips...

Small items that will make a big difference to your system

Doctor Who Tardis Mug



£15 Approx

When you're Time Lording it in front of the telly, this police box mug holds a generous 450ml and has a lid for preventing your cuppa from going cold. www.red5.co.uk

MHL to HDMI adapter



£15 Approx

This 10cm cable allows you to pipe audio and video

recorded from an MHL (Mobile High Definition Link)-compatible smartphone to an HD screen. An additional USB Micro B port is provided for simultaneous charging. www.lindy.co.uk

Energy Saving Power Meter



£15 Approx

Go green and get the low-down

on exactly how much your kit is consuming with this plug-in power meter that can show the power, voltage, cumulative usage and running costs. www.sciencestore.co.uk

LG AG-F215 3D specs



£60 Approx

The benefit of passive 3D is specs that

don't cost a bomb and don't need charging. John Lewis sells this colourful five-pack that works out at £12 a pair. www.johnlewis.com

Kaspersky ONE universal security



£60 Approx

Keep up to three devices protected against nasty viruses with this

multi-platform offering from Kaspersky. Compatibility extends to Windows, Mac OS X, Android, Symbian, Windows Mobile (6.5 and below) and BlackBerry smartphones. www.kaspersky.co.uk

THE TOP 20

Choosing a home cinema system is a potential minefield that must be negotiated with great care or safely avoided by letting experts guide you. If you want to end up with a system that, as a minimum, meets your expectations in terms of picture and sound quality, reading magazine product reviews and choosing the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys can only ever be part of the answer at best. Looking for the cheapest price and having a system delivered to your door, even with a 'knowledgeable' friend to help set it up, is a well-trodden path to disappointment.

There is a bewildering choice of components on the market today and also different ways in which components can be installed and connected together. Which sort of visual system do you go for? Projector and screen, or plasma, LCD or LED TV? 3D or non-3D? Full 1080p capability is now the only sensible choice but the appropriate source components, such as a Blu-ray player, need to be part of the equation. The sound performance of a system is also hugely important, even more so if you will be listening to music, or music DVD's, through the same system. If so, you need an amp that approaches the performance of a decent 2-channel hi-fi amp, which is not that easy to find. Having an amp with the right inputs for the best connectivity is essential but you will also need to decide on a 5.1 or 7.1 speaker system, passive or active sub and, crucially, where they will be sited for the best results. In short, it's complicated and very fertile ground for getting it wrong.

ACHIEVING POTENTIAL

To select a system, you could choose a collection of 'Best Buy' components in the hope that they will be a great combination. Maybe, but probably not. You could buy a pre-packaged all-in-one system from one manufacturer. This is almost certainly not the best route either as you will miss out on enormous potential. From informal surveys conducted, it appears highly likely that the majority of home cinema systems selected and installed on a DIY basis (that is without professional input) are performing at way below their optimum level. To compound matters, most are also ill-matched to the room in which they are installed and are, in reality, the wrong system. Without considerable knowledge or experience, high quality home cinema is not a suitable DIY activity. Our aim must be to buy a home cinema system that will provide an excellent picture quality plus an audio delivery that will match, or even better, the commercial cinema experience. It must be exciting, reliable and deliver true value for money.

WHAT AND WHERE TO BUY

To ensure a home cinema system is right for you, where do you start? Here's an important tip ...**don't** start with **WHAT**, start with **WHERE**. There's only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist AV dealer. It's possible you have preconceived ideas that put you off visiting one.

Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. These are just myths.

Most specialist AV dealers are running their business because, above all, home cinema is their hobby. They spend a large portion of their time comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. Very importantly, they know how to get a system working to its optimum. But they all also know the system must suit **you**.



“...Our aim must be to buy a home cinema system that will provide an excellent picture quality plus an audio delivery that will match, or even better, the commercial cinema experience.”

So good you'll believe you're there!

WorldMags.net

GUIDE

TO BUYING HOME A CINEMA SYSTEM



BUYING OR BEING SOLD TO?

There are dealers around, web based or otherwise, who will sell you anything you are willing to pay for. They may be a bit cheaper but that's all they offer. Now there's a carefully selected group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge. You'll probably be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to see and hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it performs to its best, and ensure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

GETTING THE BEST DEAL

Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a far better way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

LISTED BELOW ARE 20 OF THE BEST AV SHOPS IN THE COUNTRY

They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards home cinema systems that will provide years of superlative performance and total satisfaction.

SOUTH

Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION

216 Moulsham Street. 01245 265245
www.rayleighhifi.com

Colchester NEW TECHNOLOGY UNLIMITED

33 Sir Isaac's Walk. 01206 577682
www.newtechnologyunlimited.com

Kingston-upon-Thames INFIDELITY

9 High Street, Hampton Wick.
020 8943 3530
www.infidelity.co.uk

Maidenhead AUDIO VENUE

36 Queen Street. 01628 633995
www.audiovenue.com

Rayleigh, Essex RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION

44a High Street. 01268 779762
Custom Install Dept.
01268 776932
www.rayleighhifi.com

Southend-on-Sea RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION

132/4 London Road. 01702 435255
www.rayleighhifi.com

Tunbridge Wells KENT HOME CINEMA

69 London Road, Southborough.
01892 535007
www.kenthomecinema.co.uk

LONDON

Ealing AUDIO VENUE

27 Bond Street. 020 8567 8703
www.audiovenue.com

N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI

190a New North Road. 020 7226 5500
www.grahams.co.uk

SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS

61-63 Webbs Road, Battersea.
020 7924 2040
www.oandlhifi.co.uk

SW20 O'BRIEN HI-FI

60 Durham Road.
020 8946 1528
www.obrienhifi.com

MIDLANDS

Coventry FRANK HARVEY HI-FI EXCELLENCE

163 Spon Street. 024 7652 5200
www.frankharvey.co.uk

Nottingham CASTLE SOUND & VISION

48/50 Maid Marian Way. 0115 9584404
www.castlesoundvision.com

Solihull MUSIC MATTERS

93-95 Hobs Moat Road. 0121 742 0254
www.musicmatters.co.uk

NORTH

Chester ACOUSTICA

17 Hoole Road. 01244 344227
www.acoustica.co.uk

York SOUND ORGANISATION

2 Gillygate. 01904 627108
www.soundorg.co.uk



The majority of the above dealers are members of one or both of the major trade organisations, BADA or CEDIA.

STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SERVICE ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
FACILITIES ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VERDICT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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- Network streaming and Wireless-N

Designed for the Audiophile, the Oppo BDP-95EU also features:

- Dual ES9018 SABRE 32-bit reference DAC (7.1 and dedicated stereo)
- Balanced stereo XLR
- Toroidal transformer



For further details and prices contact AV Aficionado:
0845 370 0054 | info@avaficionado.co.uk
or buy online at:
www.avaficionado.co.uk

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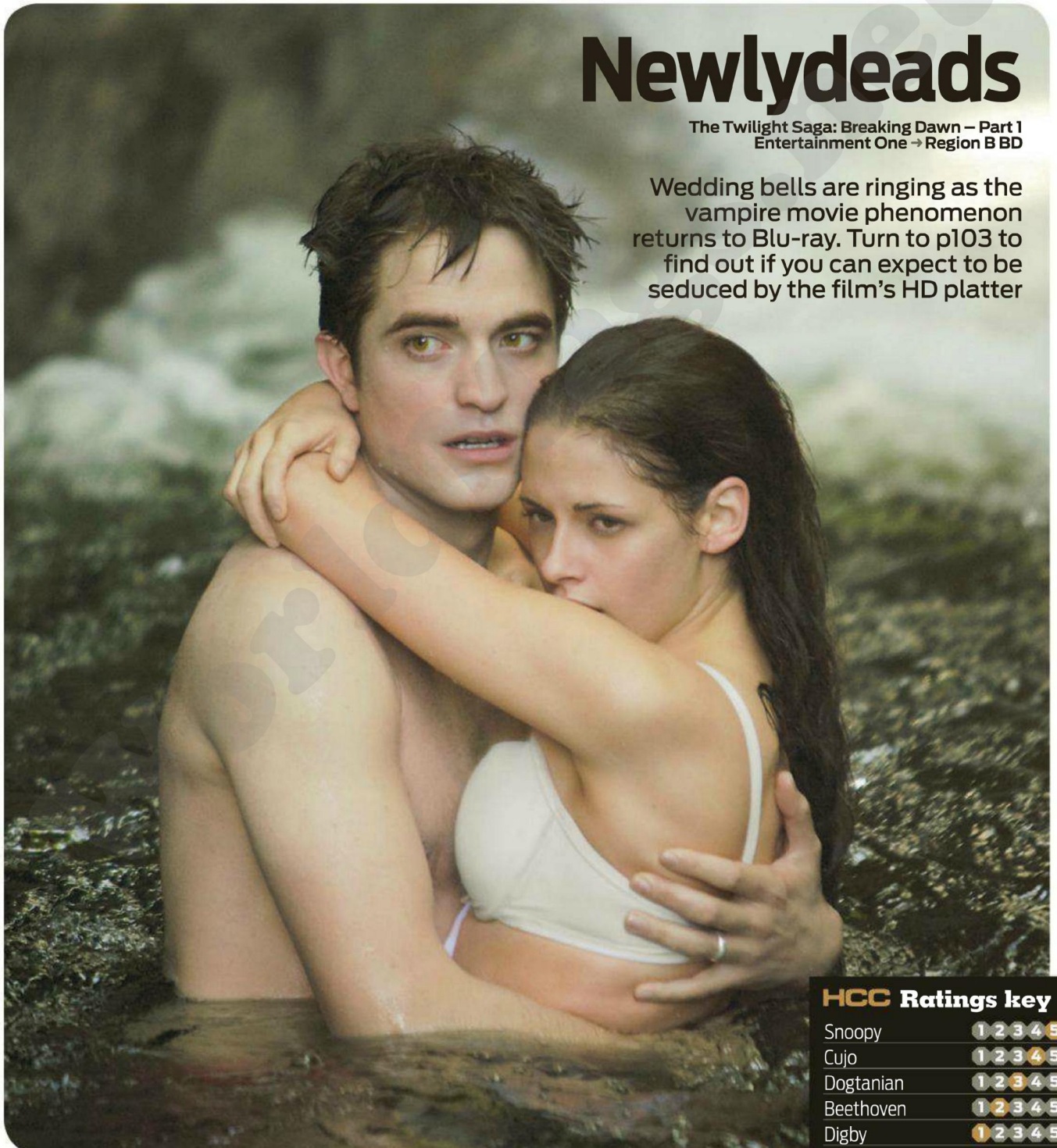
PLAYBACK

→ **Software highlights** **THE THREE MUSKETEERS IN 3D** Historical romp full of stereoscopic swashbuckling **CONTAGION** Star-studded viral outbreak spreads to Blu-ray **STRAW DOGS** Controversial classic remade in HD **KILLER ELITE** Statham! Owen! De Niro! **LADY AND THE TRAMP** Disney lets its Diamond dogs off the leash **AND MORE!**

Newlydeads

The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1
Entertainment One → Region B BD

Wedding bells are ringing as the vampire movie phenomenon returns to Blu-ray. Turn to p103 to find out if you can expect to be seduced by the film's HD platter



HCC Ratings key

Snoopy	1 2 3 4 5
Cujo	1 2 3 4 5
Dogtanian	1 2 3 4 5
Beethoven	1 2 3 4 5
Digby	1 2 3 4 5



All for one and 3D for all

Re-imagining injects stereoscopic swordplay into the classic action-adventure romp

→ The Three Musketeers in 3D

There have been numerous screen adaptations of Alexander Dumas' literary classic over the years. But none of them ever featured flying boats or Milady pulling off moves that wouldn't look out of place in a martial arts film. Until now.

Paul WS Anderson's latest is wonderfully daft. It might not be particularly big or clever, but the action is breathtaking and the charismatic cast ensure that the gags will leave a smile on your face. No wonder Quentin Tarantino picked it as one of his 11 best movies of last year.

Picture: Crisp, clean and exceptionally detailed, *The Three Musketeers* looks mind-blowing in both its 2D and 3D guises (provided in this set on separate discs).

The 'flat' presentation's AVC 2.40:1 1080p might lack the 3D version's stereoscopic effects, but more than makes up for it with a saturated colour palette and sharpness. This has the effect of giving sequences such as the long-shot of Buckingham's welcoming committee in Chapter 8 a palpable sense of depth.

Of course, if you really want depth, you should check out the 3D platter. Anderson has previously shown his talents for live-action 3D with the awesome *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, and *...Musketeers* carries on from where he left off. Many of the same tricks are employed here (fighting in water, slow-motion, large pointy weapons). It's not



always subtle, but highly enjoyable. And scenes like the visit to Da Vinci's vault are framed to draw you into the action. Good stuff.

Audio: *The Three Musketeers'* DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack is as playful as the 3D visuals. While the dialogue and music are never less than clear throughout, it's the continual use of the surrounds that brings the wow factor. Subtle atmospheric accompaniment all locations, while the high-energy action scenes (the stand-out being the attack on the Tower of London in Chapter 13) are a masterclass in sonic design, with a real smoothness to the panning effects.

Extras: The biggest disappointment about Entertainment One's two-disc set is the rather meagre selection of bonus features on offer.

Paul WS Anderson is joined by producers Jeremy Bolt and Robert Kulzer for a feature-length chat track that takes you through the making of the film and the reasons why they were attracted to the project. This is followed by a quartet of featurettes – *Paul WS Anderson's Musketeers* talks about the director's approach to the story, *Duke* covers Orlando Bloom's role in the film, *17th Century Air Travel* focuses on the flying galleon set and *Uncovering France in Germany* deals with the location shooting. However, with none of the four clocking in at more than three minutes, don't expect any of them to go into too much detail.

Finally there's a 14-min collection of ten extended and two deleted scenes, and a *Did You Know?* pop-up trivia track. **AvB**

HCC VERDICT

The Three Musketeers in 3D → Entertainment One Region B BD → £25 Approx

We say: Extras are lacking, but this actioner proves a superb 3D BD showcase

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The Change-Up

Universal Pictures → All-region BD/
R2 DVD → £25 Approx



Ryan Reynolds and Jason Bateman play friends who swap bodies after wishing they had each

other's lives. While urinating in a magic fountain. In other words, this is basically *Freaky Friday* minus the age difference, but with the addition of lashings of toilet humour and nudity. And it's also pretty funny.

This Triple Play release has an appealingly warm AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode accompanied by a controlled DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix. Blu-ray features include two versions of the film, a commentary track, two short featurettes and a gag reel. **MC**



Moneyball

Sony Pictures → All-region BD
£25 Approx



Even if you have absolutely no interest in baseball, don't let that put you off this true story

about two men who shook the sport to its foundations.

Despite some digital noise in a handful of scenes, the quality of the AVC 1.85:1 1080p transfer is very high, really getting the best out of Wally Pfister's gorgeous cinematography. The DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix isn't quite so striking, making little use of the surrounds outside of crowd noise during the games. Four interesting featurettes, three deleted scenes and an outtake make up the extras. **MC**



Anonymous

Sony Pictures → All-region BD
£25 Approx



Roland Emmerich takes a break from destroying the world and instead sets out to question the

authorship of William Shakespeare's plays in this daft period thriller.

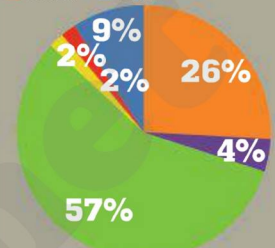
While the film itself isn't even remotely as smart or engaging as Shakespeare's plays, at least it looks and sounds pretty snazzy thanks a crisp AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode and rambunctious DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack. The Blu-ray also serves up a fairly middling selection of extras including a commentary, three short featurettes, three deleted scenes and two extended sequences. **AvB**



We asked...

Which of this year's comic book movies are you most excited about?

- Orange The Avengers
- Purple The Amazing Spider-Man
- Green The Dark Knight Rises
- Yellow Men in Black III
- Red Dredd
- Blue None



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

Atishoo atishoo we all fall down

Soderbergh's star-studded viral thriller proves less infectious than expected on Blu-ray

→ Contagion

A simple business trip to Hong Kong results in a global pandemic that threatens to wipe out a vast proportion of the human race in Steven Soderbergh's medical thriller. But despite it's all-star cast (including Gwyneth Paltrow, Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Jude Law and Laurence Fishburne), *Contagion* couldn't be further removed from the likes of *Outbreak*.

Instead, Soderbergh's film is content to follow various plot threads around the globe as humanity tries to comprehend what is happening and come to terms with it. Sadly, while the end result is forensically fascinating, it proves dramatically inert in terms of narrative. This leaves it feeling a lot like the BBC docu-drama *Supervolcano* and its ilk, only minus the voice-over narration.

Picture: Shot using the ubiquitous Red One digital camera, *Contagion* makes a seamless transition to Blu-ray. Surprisingly, the film's AVC 1.85:1 1080p encode doesn't even suffer from the hot whites and flat blacks that often typify material shot digitally. Much of this is undoubtedly down to the saturated colour palette used throughout the film, which brings to mind the director's earlier hit *Traffic*.

Thankfully, this excessive colour-grading doesn't appear to have had any effect on image detail – with even the finest wrinkles and textures in evidence. Edge enhancement and artefacting are also nowhere to be seen.

Audio: *Contagion*'s DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 soundtrack is unlikely to get you too excited (much like the movie) but it still strives to create a realistic and enveloping soundfield. The all-important science babble is clean, natural

sounding and locked into the centre channel, and the rear soundstage is called upon more frequently than you might think. There's also some effective and pervasive use of LFE in here, too.

Extras: Despite the opportunity for some fascinating documentary material, *Contagion*'s extras are thin on the ground.

The Reality of Contagion is a disappointingly brief 11-minute exploration of the threat of a genuine global pandemic, featuring the film's scientific advisors and members of the cast. Many of the same faces also crop up in the five-minute *The Contagion Detectives*, which focuses on the film's advisors and the training the actors received. Finally, *Contagion: How a Virus Changes the World* is a two-minute fake infomercial about the life cycle of the virus

featured in the film. The disc also features a BD-Live link and comes accompanied by a DVD and UltraViolet Digital Copy of the film. **AvB**



HCC VERDICT

Contagion: Triple Play → Warner Home Video → All-region BD/R2 DVD → £23 Approx

We say: While no disaster, this thriller certainly disappoints – as do the Blu-ray extras

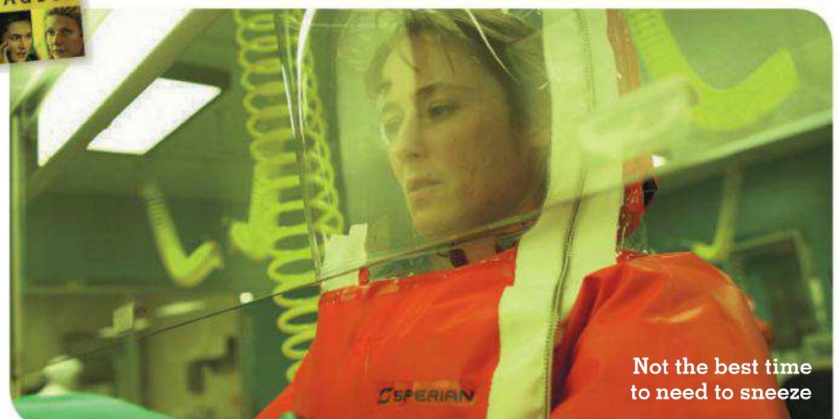
Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Not the best time to need to sneeze



Timberlake
auditions to
be the next
James Bond



The time of your life

Heavy-handed futuristic thriller finds Justin Timberlake's body clock ticking down to zero



→ In Time

The science-fiction genre has frequently proven fertile ground for allegories about concerns regarding the world we live in. Andrew 'Gattaca' Niccol's latest film is one of the more ham-fisted to come along in recent years.

In Time conjures up a near-future where people work in order to be paid the minutes, hours and days they need to live. Meanwhile the wealthy have immortality conferred on them, but only if they live a boring, risk-free life. Subtle it isn't. But at least Justin Timberlake (who is proving to be a credible actor) and Amanda Seyfried make for an engaging sci-fi Bonnie and Clyde, while Cillian Murphy steals the show as the by-the-book cop pursuing them.

Picture: *In Time* might not be up there with *Blade Runner* in the sci-fi stakes, but it's certainly a good-looking movie. Fox's AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode is a thing of true beauty, delivering the kind of crisp definition and perfect colour balance that will look just as spectacular on a big projector screen as it does on a 42in TV.

Contrast and brightness are particularly impressive, ensuring that even the darkest scenes have a palpable sense of depth and no shortage of fine detailing. Colours pack

punch. And there are no traces of any kind of technical anomalies.

Audio: *In Time* isn't quite the all-action fest you might expect, and therefore its DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 soundtrack is short of true demo-worthy sequences. That said, the mix works extremely hard (arguably harder than the script) to bring

Niccol's futuristic world to life, with heavy dollops of ambient noise spread around the speakers to create a genuine sense of space and scale. In the midst of this aural landscape, the dialogue and score are highlighted with exceptional clarity.

Extras: Having failed to set the global box office alight, it's perhaps not too surprising that *In Time* isn't blessed with an abundance of bonus features on Blu-ray. But even so, it is still disappointing to see just how little effort 20th Century Fox has put into this aspect of the release.

First up comes *The Minutes*, which is an instantly forgettable 17-minute faux documentary featuring in-character interviews with the principal cast about the subject of immortality. I mean, really: who cares?

Then comes a collection of ten deleted/extended scenes, only a handful of which are of any real interest. And other than a generic Fox BD-Live link, plus a DVD and Digital Copy of the film, that's your lot. Perhaps they simply ran out of time... **AvB**

HCC VERDICT

In Time: Triple Play → 20th Century Fox → All-region BD/R2 DVD → £25 Approx

We say: An amiable sci-fi time-waster that certainly looks and sounds the part on Blu-ray

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



DUNE HD MAX



Key Features

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- **Network player:** connect the player to a local network and play content directly from PC or NAS (UPnP, SMB, NFS).
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- **RealD:** watch 3D video in this ultra modern format used in cinema for the latest movies.
- **HD audio:** enjoy top-quality audio tracks (Dolby True HD, DTS HD Master Audio, LPCM, FLAC).
- **3 USB ports:** conveniently connect HDDs, USB flash drives, USB card readers and other USB storage devices.
- **HDD rack with hot swap function:** easily and quickly insert and exchange internal 3.5" SATA HDD.
- **SD card slot:** easily play media files on SD memory cards from your camera or other devices, or use an SD memory card as a local or system storage (required for BD Live function).
- **HDMI 1.3:** ensure the best possible quality of HD video and HD audio.
- **A rich set of standard A/V connectors:** use S/PDIF optical audio, stereo audio, component video, composite video outputs to easily connect any A/V equipment.
- **Extended support for Dolby True HD and DTS HD Master Audio:** output bitstream (up to 7.1 channels) or decode to LPCM (up to 7.1 channels) for maximum flexibility when connecting audio equipment, and for extended support of advanced playback features (such as Picture-in-Picture).
- **Video output flexibility:** output video in any resolution and format (from SD to 1080p, 24p/PAL/NTSC).
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His fellow hunters never forgave David for his fashion faux pas



All bark and no bite?

Controversial classic gets redneck makeover, but loses something in translation

→ Straw Dogs

According to producer Marc Frydman, Sam Peckinpah's controversial 1971 thriller *Straw Dogs* (starring Dustin Hoffman) is 'a movie that never really worked in America' due to the fact that 'it was shot in England'. Which is presumably why the remake he produced has shifted the action to Louisiana, allowing mild-mannered Hollywood screenwriter David Sumner (James Marsden) to face off against a rather predictable bunch of stereotypical rednecks.

While Frydman's justification for the story's relocation is pretty spurious, writer/director Rob Lurie at least has the skills to put together an effective 'rednecks vs city folk' thriller for anyone unfamiliar with the original. It's just a shame that nobody involved in the remake could inject any fresh ideas to replace the moral ambiguity that has been stripped away here, but which made Peckinpah's original such a haunting experience.

Picture: It sometimes seems as if Sony Pictures can do no wrong with its Blu-ray encodes, and *Straw Dogs* does nothing to change this opinion. While post-production grading tends to push colours a little warmer than is natural (presumably to enhance the illusion of the sticky Louisiana heat) the disc's AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode constantly impresses. Detailing is sharp and defined, blacks levels are satisfyingly deep, and the light grain structure emphasises

the movie's cinematic origin. If only every new movie received this much care during the transfer to hi-def.

Audio: *Straw Dogs*' DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack is proof that reference quality audio isn't only reserved for Hollywood's major blockbusters. This mix is faultless – everything about it seems effortless and perfectly balanced, which is surprising when you realise just how much is at play in the soundfield. Both interior and exterior scenes benefit from flawless execution of atmospheric effects – be it the high-impact snap of a gunshot or the general ambience of the crowd at a football game. The final act takes the sound design to another level with its astonishing dynamics and precision.

Extras: Anyone buying this platter should check out the audio commentary by director Rod Lurie. While I certainly don't agree with all of his decisions, there's no denying that Lurie is an intelligent man and very passionate about the film he's made. This results in one of the most interesting chat tracks I've heard in some time, mixing production details with discussions of Peckinpah's film and the criticism that surrounded the idea of remaking it.

Next to that, the four short production featurettes feel rather lacking – although they do at least give the cast and chance to discuss both the remake and the original movie. The only other extras on the disc are Sony's generic BD-Live portal and previews for three other films. **AvB**



HCC VERDICT

Straw Dogs → Sony Pictures Region B BD → £25 Approx

We say: Strong visuals and reference-quality audio ensure this middling remake is worth investigating on Blu-ray

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Killer Elite

Entertainment in Video
Region B BD → £25 Approx



Despite being loosely based on a novel by Sir Ranulph Fiennes and featuring Robert De Niro and Clive

Owen in supporting roles, *Killer Elite* is really no different from the bulk of Jason Statham's films to date. Predictable but enjoyable, the movie offers the usual mix of gruff acting and shooting, albeit this time anchored to a story that claims to be based on real events.

The Blu-ray disc is every bit as adequate as the film, featuring excellent AVC 2.40:1 1080p visuals and DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio, tempered by functional extras in the form of a *Making of...*, interview and trailer. **MC**



Special Forces

StudioCanal → Region B BD
£20 Approx



A small special forces squad faces up to overwhelming odds when it's sent to rescue a female

journalist kidnapped in Afghanistan. Proving that Hollywood isn't the only place capable of churning out gung-ho tales of military derring-do, this French action film proves every bit as efficient, clichéd and entertaining as its US brethren. This Blu-ray release certainly holds up its part of the deal with pristine AVC 2.40:1 1080p imagery and explosive DTS-HD MA 5.1 sonics. Extras take the form of a 88-min *Making of...*, seven deleted scenes and an interview with the film's military adviser. **AvB**



Abduction

Lionsgate → Region B BD/R2 DVD
£25 Approx



Presumably *Twilight* star Taylor Lautner thought he'd get the chance to prove he's more than just a

walking, talking, six-pack by nabbing the lead role in this thriller. Unfortunately, the film quickly establishes Lautner's limitations as an actor and represents a career low for director John Singleton. That said, both the AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode and DTS-HD MA 7.1 soundtrack go all out to impress with their impeccable AV credentials. Extras boil down to a trio of short featurettes that can be watched independently or as PIP material while the film is rolling, a gag reel and a DVD copy of the film. **AvB**



The Conformist

Arrow Video → Region B BD/R2 DVD
£28 Approx



Having missed out previously on a DVD release in the UK, Bernardo Bertolucci's best-loved film finally

makes it to shelves in the form of this Double Play Blu-ray release. And while the wait has been lengthy, Arrow has made amends with a grain-packed AVC 1.66:1 1080p encode that – while clearly taken from an old master – still gives a film-like feel to the dazzling cinematography. The dual-mono LPCM audio is surprisingly clean and rich. Extras are few, but fascinating. There's a chat-track by film expert David Forgacs, a 52-min doc about Bertolucci, a booklet and a bonus DVD. **AvB**



The school of hard shocks

Spooky period chiller adds a touch of class to the haunted house genre

→ The Awakening

The year is 1919 and in a country wracked by past-war grief Florence Cathcart (Rebecca Hall) makes a living exposing fraudulent spiritualists. An invitation from a desperate teacher (Dominic West) takes her to an isolated boarding school to debunk stories of a ghostly boy that is said to have caused the death of one of the students. Naturally, things don't go as planned.

While it's far from perfect (the final twist is both obvious and contrived), this handsomely mounted period chiller is a fine companion to the likes of *The Innocents* and *The Others*. Nick Murphy's assured direction leads to some very effective scares and he draws wonderful performances from the two leads. Recommended.

Picture: *The Awakening* comes to Blu-ray with a cold AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode that undoubtedly does an excellent job of replicating the intended look of the film. Indeed, director Nick Murphy claims this 'misrepresented and desaturated' approach to colour throughout the film was key to creating a sense that post-war Britain was itself sick. When added to the film's impenetrable shadows and use of heavy grain, the net result is a particularly evocative and atmospheric picture that serves the ghostly material well.

Audio: While *The Awakening* is quite old-fashioned in terms of its approach to the genre, the sound design is anything but. Knowing exactly when to restrain itself and when to unleash something more dynamic, the lossless DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix builds tension and unsettles the viewer – much more so than the unimaginative digital FX employed for shock effect on a couple of occasions.



Bad filing is
a sure sign of
a haunting

HCC VERDICT

The Awakening: Double Play
StudioCanal → Region B BD/
R2 DVD → £23 Approx

We say: A handsome HD package
for a classy supernatural chiller

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Extras: Writer/director Nick Murphy gets the ball rolling with a talkative audio commentary. This is followed by a 35-min *Behind the Scenes* doc, featuring interviews with Murphy and actors Rebecca Holland, Dominic West and Imelda Staunton.

The same faces pop up in two further featurettes, the 24-min *A Time for Ghosts* and 16-min *Anatomy of a Scream*. The first looks at the UK's damaged psyche and the growth of spiritualism following World War I, while the second gives the participants the chance to air their own beliefs about the supernatural.

Anatomy of a Scene: *Florence and the Lake* is a 15-min look at the making of a key sequence. There's also a six-min Q&A with Murphy and Holland, a further 19-min interview with the director, a 27-min reel of seven deleted scenes with lengthy intros from Murphy, and the trailer. The set also includes a DVD of the film. **AvB**

Arcade action

Bigscreen home entertainment isn't just about movies anymore. Check out these two videogames vying for time on your home cinema system...

Final Fantasy XIII-2

Square Enix → Xbox 360/PS3 → £50 Approx



It's now 15 years since the PlayStation release of *Final Fantasy VII* brought the Japanese RPG franchise to the attention of mainstream gamers across the globe. But the intervening years have seen a change of fortune for developer Square Enix, with the *Final Fantasy* brand becoming a victim of its own success and struggling to live up to former glories.

Which brings us to *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, a genuine sequel to the last game in the series (which in itself is a bit of a rarity for the franchise). Not that you actually need to have played *FF XIII* to understand what's happening here because a) there's a 'story so far' video guide available from on the opening menu, and b) *FF XIII-2*'s plot is a bunch of time travel nonsense that makes very little sense.

Where this latest game does succeed to a degree is in combating some of the gameplay flaws present in the previous outing – meaning it's a much less linear affair with a refined combat system. As expected, *FF XIII-2* also looks and sounds fantastic, with the opening 20-min battle providing a solid showcase for the audio-visual highlights to come.

But while it looks great, the sequence doesn't actually provide any real challenge, something else that's true of the game that follows. An improvement on *FF XIII* then, but only a modest one.

1 2 3 4 5

SoulCalibur V

Namco → Xbox 360/PS3 → £50 Approx



While it doesn't quite have the same kind of brand recognition as either *Street Fighter* or *Tekken*, Namco's *SoulCalibur* series has still carved itself a sizeable following amongst beat 'em up fans. Much of this can be put down to the fact that – despite being

based around similar one-on-one tournaments – the games play quite differently from the competition.

This is largely down to the series' dedicated focus on armed combatants. The result being a slightly more cautious, cat-and-

mouse style of play, rather than the endless combo juggling that has come to dominate the traditional 'fists and feet' beat 'em 'up. Not that this latest sequel is completely averse to such gameplay mechanisms. The newly implemented Critical Edge gauge allows players to unleash devastating combos that prove extremely handy for fighting back from apparently no-win situations.

The updated gameplay is matched by stunning, ultra-fast visuals (long a trademark of the series) and a roster of additional game modes. These include a hilariously overwrought Story mode and a fun character customisation tool that allows you to cook up some bafflingly brilliant fighters to play around with.

1 2 3 4 5

Lady & the Tramp: Diamond Edition

Walt Disney Home Entertainment → All-region BD → £25 Approx



While it's not quite as feature-packed as some of Disney's earlier Diamond Edition Blu-rays, there's no getting away from the fact that this is another superb release. Restored frame-by-frame, this animated classic comes to Blu-ray with a breathtaking AVC 2.55:1 1080p encode that boasts terrific clarity and fluidity. The

imagery is ably supported by a playful DTS-HD MA 7.1 remix (disappointingly, this UK disc has ditched the lossless 3.0 mix from the US release). All of the old DVD extras are included, plus an *Inside Walt's Story Meetings* transcript-based commentary. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

We Need to Talk About Kevin

Artificial Eye → Region B BD → £20 Approx



Lynne Ramsay's remarkable thriller stars Tilda Swinton as the mother of a teenage boy who goes on a killing spree at his high school. Told primarily through flashbacks, the film explores the mother's relationship with the son she never loved as she attempts to uncover her own blame in his actions. While it isn't the kind of film that

really showcases your setup, Artificial Eye's disc sports a handsomely rendered high-bitrate AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode. The DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix is understandably muted. Interviews and a trailer are the only extras. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Crazy, Stupid, Love

Warner Home Video → All-region BD/R2 DVD → £25 Approx



With this and last month's *Friends with Benefits*, Hollywood seems to be raising its game when it comes to rom-coms. *Crazy, Stupid, Love* manages to straddle the difficult line of feeling refreshingly honest while not forgetting to make you laugh as it traverses the usual genre clichés and pitfalls. Unfortunately, while the BD's AVC

2.40:1 1080p encode replicates perfectly the film's rich hues, it also feels unrefined and lacking in detail. Deleted scenes and two short featurettes make up the disc-based extras. A DVD and UltraViolet Digital Copy are also included. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Midnight in Paris

Warner Home Video → R2 DVD → £15 Approx



Woody Allen's latest returns to the kind of cinematic fantasy he previously explored with the likes of *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. Owen Wilson plays a struggling writer holidaying in Paris with his fiancée, who ends up travelling back in time to the 1920s where he goes drinking with Ernest Hemingway and falls in love with Picasso's

mistress (Marion Cotillard). It's charming stuff, accompanied by a wonderful soundtrack that proves the highlight of the disc's otherwise flat DD5.1 mix. Sadly, the anamorphic 1.85:1 transfer lacks finesse and there are no extras whatsoever. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Definitely not the sort of move Dracula would make with a young lady



Til death us do part

The end is (almost) nigh for the phenomenally successful sparkly vampire saga

→ The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1

Taking a leaf out of Harry's Potter's spell book, the final *Twilight* novel has been split into two movies. This wouldn't necessarily have been a problem – except this instalment barely has enough plot to justify 45-mins of screen time, let alone the best part of two-hours!

Not that the franchise's blinkered fanbase will care one jot. They'll undoubtedly be too busy swooning at Edward and Bella's wedding and their long-awaited night of necrophilic passion. Or gasping in amazement as Jacob falls in love with a newborn baby... Come to think about it, given *Twilight's* huge teen fanbase, this flick is pretty perverted. Oh, well, at least it'll all be over soon enough.

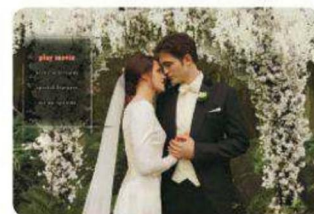
Picture: *TSBDP1* might be a complete non-starter in terms of narrative, but at least it looks pretty bloody lovely in hi-def. Director Bill Condon conjures up some gorgeous images – such as Bella's pre-wedding dream sequence in Chapter 2 – that enable the Blu-ray's AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode to show what it's capable of. Elsewhere, the expanded palette offered by the honeymoon sequence shows off how easily it can resolve fine details and bright colours – and not just the usual verdant greens, deep blacks and warm browns that have become the trademark of the franchise's visual style.



Audio: Given how nothing particularly dramatic happens in the film until well past the one-hour mark, it's hardly surprising that the DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix doesn't set out to wow you from the get-go. Instead, it's content to simply do the best it can with the dialogue and music – both of which are rendered perfectly. However, things perk up in the final third of the film, starting with the Wolf Pack's telepathic communication in Chapter 11, where voices swirling around you. Then, when the vamps and lycanthropes come to blows in Chapter 16, you're treated to some sizeable bass blows and directional effects.

Extras: Previous *Twilight* Blu-rays have offered up generous selections of bonus features. But when it comes to *Breaking Dawn – Part 1*, the extras are as slight as the film's plot.

The only feature that actually deals with the making of the movie is the audio commentary by Bill Condon. Thankfully he manages to mix the gushing platitudes about the cast and how hard they all worked with some informative details about the shoot. The only other video extras are the 9-min *Bella and Edward's Personal Wedding Video* (in-character tributes to the happy couple. Yuck.), the 24-min *UK Premiere Footage* (red carpet interviews) and a collection of four music videos. The Blu-ray also features the familiar *Jump to...* topic menu and comes bundled with a bonus DVD. **AvB**



HCC VERDICT

The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1 → Entertainment One → Region B BD/R2 DVD
£25 Approx

We say: Superb AV performance from a truly dreadful film

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Nobody wanted to be first to dive into the church's new indoor pool



State of emergency

Kevin Smith takes on religious extremism with surprisingly explosive results

→ Red State

Eyebrows were raised when former indie wunderkind Kevin Smith announced that his next film would be a horror movie. This is, after all, the man best known for his love of geek trivia and foul-mouthed speechifying.

So it's not exactly surprising that *Red State* isn't really a horror film. Sure, it may start off like yet another torture porn outing, with three high school kids kidnapped by an extremist religious group (a parody of the notorious Westboro Baptist Church) after being fooled into thinking they were responding to an online sex ad. But before long it transforms into something completely different, as the ATF gets involved and it turns into a Waco-style siege.

In other words, it's not exactly what Smith originally promised, or what fans might expect – but it's still an engrossing movie, and unlike anything he's ever done before.

Picture: I'll make no bones about it – this is a good-looking Blu-ray encode. Right from the opening shot, the AVC 1.85:1 1080p transfer unleashes a bright, sharp and crisply detailed image that really catches the eye. Gone is the somewhat grungy lo-fi aesthetic that typified many of Smith's earlier output, replaced by a smooth and clean picture that simply screams digital cinema. Very, very impressive.

Audio: Smith has often been criticised for making films that basically boil down to people standing



HCC VERDICT

Red State → Entertainment One Region B BD → £20 Approx

We say: A dramatic change of pace for Kevin Smith and a terrific Blu-ray package

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

around talking. And while *Red State*'s first act might have you thinking the same thing, stay with the movie and you're rewarded by a DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundscape that is light years beyond anything he's attempted before, with gunfire whizzing all around you and some devastating low-end in the surprise finale.

Extras: Just because he hasn't recorded a chat track for *Red State*, don't think that Kevin Smith has nothing to say about his latest flick. Fans of the motormouth director will find plenty of opportunity to listen to him in full flow, discussing every aspect of the film's production – and distribution – thanks to the inclusion of all 13 of Smith's *Red State of the Union* 'SModcasts'. Running anywhere between 28 and 163 mins, these audio-only extras are best dipped into every now and then, but together add up to a comprehensive chronicle of *Red State*'s creation.

If you prefer your bonus features to also include moving pictures, then the BD also has some other bits extras to savour. *Making of Red State* is a self-explanatory 44-min documentary and *The Sundance Speech* is a 36-min video of the controversial presentation Smith gave at the Sundance film festival to potential Hollywood buyers last year (an uncut audio recording is included as one of the SModcasts). There's also an 18-min interview with actor Michael Parks, 31 mins of deleted material, three trailers and a poster gallery. Each of the video extras is presented in 576p and features an intro from Smith. **AvB**

All Quiet on the Western Front

Universal Pictures → All-region BD
£20 Approx



The second release in a year-long series of restorations celebrating Universal's 100th anniversary, this legendary anti-war film looks far better than I ever expected in hi-def. While some digital filtering and sharpening is in evidence, it's quite restrained by Universal's standards, and is overshadowed by the otherwise spectacular quality of the AVC 1.33:1 1080p encode. The DTS-HD MA 2.0 mono mix is as limited as you'd expect for a film made in 1930. Extras include the silent version of the film, the trailer and an intro – all in SD. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Dark Star

Fabulous Films → Region B BD
£20 Approx



Given that it started life as a student film and was shot on 16mm, nobody should expect this 1974 sci-fi cult classic to represent the pinnacle of hi-def video. But, even with that in mind, it's disappointing to see that this AVC 1.85:1 1080p encode doesn't do it full justice thanks to the liberal application of DNR that's eradicated most film grain from the image (and some fine detail as well). That the DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix is flat, muffled and lacking range comes as no surprise given the lousy source material. Pick of the extras is a superb 117-min documentary. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Teen Wolf

20th Century Fox → Region B BD
£10 Approx



As a child of the 1980s, I have a lot of time for this light-hearted Michael J Fox movie that mixes the usual cinematic adolescent woes with a great big dollop of lycanthropy. Some of the werewolf effects are pretty ropy, but Fox is simply brilliant and there are enough good gags to keep you going. This unexpected Blu-ray release features a rather soft AVC 1.85:1 1080p transfer sourced from a print you would hardly describe as being in top-notch condition. Just as disappointing are the extras – just the film's trailer and a teaser for the new TV reboot. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Dellamorte Dellamore

Shameless → R2 DVD
£15 Approx



Argento protégé Michele Soavi has been poorly served on DVD in the UK with the likes of *The Church* and *The Sect* remaining mysteriously unavailable. This release rectifies the situation somewhat with an extremely attractive presentation of Soavi's best film (and one of my all-time genre favourites). The anamorphic 1.66:1 transfer is gorgeous, the crisply-rendered stereo soundtrack is available in both Italian and English, and the disc includes a fascinating commentary, photo gallery and the Italian trailer. **AvB**

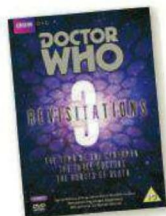
1 2 3 4 5

Second time lucky for Who

The Doctor Who DVD range travels back in time to revisit some old titles



→ Doctor Who: Revisitations 3



It's a good time to be a fan of classic *Doctor Who* right now. Not only did we have the news about the rediscovery of two missing episodes at the end of last year, but the DVD range is also getting closer to the end, with fewer than 15 complete serials still awaiting release at the time of writing.

In the meantime, this latest boxset finds the Doctor Who Restoration Team revisiting three previously released titles, upgraded with improved transfers and brand-new extras. And unlike its predecessor, *Revisitations 3* serves up a trio of proper classics – *The Tomb of the Cybermen*, *The Three Doctors* and *The Robots of Death*.

Picture: *The Tomb of the Cybermen* is the most obvious beneficiary of the improved image quality, simply for the fact that the four episodes have been treated to the VidFIRE (Video Field Interpolation Restoration Effect) technology that was developed after the original DVD release. This restores an original video look to material shot on TV cameras, but which now only survives on off-air film recordings. Further restoration has also been done to fix some of the damage that appeared in the source material and was present on the earlier DVD.

The Three Doctors and *The Robots of Death* are less noticeably improved in a visual sense, but these remasters look impeccable for TV material of their vintage. The former does have one interesting anomaly though: a black artefact that obscures Katy Manning's face during one scene – however this appears to be an authentic transmission problem stemming from the use of CSO (Colour Separation Overlay) in the scene rather than a technical glitch with the DVD itself.

Audio: All three stories feature digitally remastered mono audio and sound adequate given the source material. There are no technical issues to be found (at least none that didn't exist in the original recording) and, while not exactly electrifying, they are at least wholly authentic.

Extras: 2Entertain's five-disc set is absolutely overflowing with goodies. Each serial gets a commentary (two in the case of *Tomb...*), plus the usual excellent retrospective *Making of...* documentaries. Also included are a variety of ancillary featurettes (including a look at the female companions in the '70s, the VidFIRE process and the portrayal of robots throughout the classic series).

On top of this you also get the usual roster of photo galleries, archival interviews and TV clips, continuity announcements, extensive PDF content and even a *Doctor Who*-themed TV ad for Walls' Sky Ray lollies! **AvB**

HCC VERDICT

Doctor Who: Revisitations 3
Zentertain Ltd. → R2 DVD
£35 Approx

We say: A must-own for any fan of this classic BBC sci-fi series

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

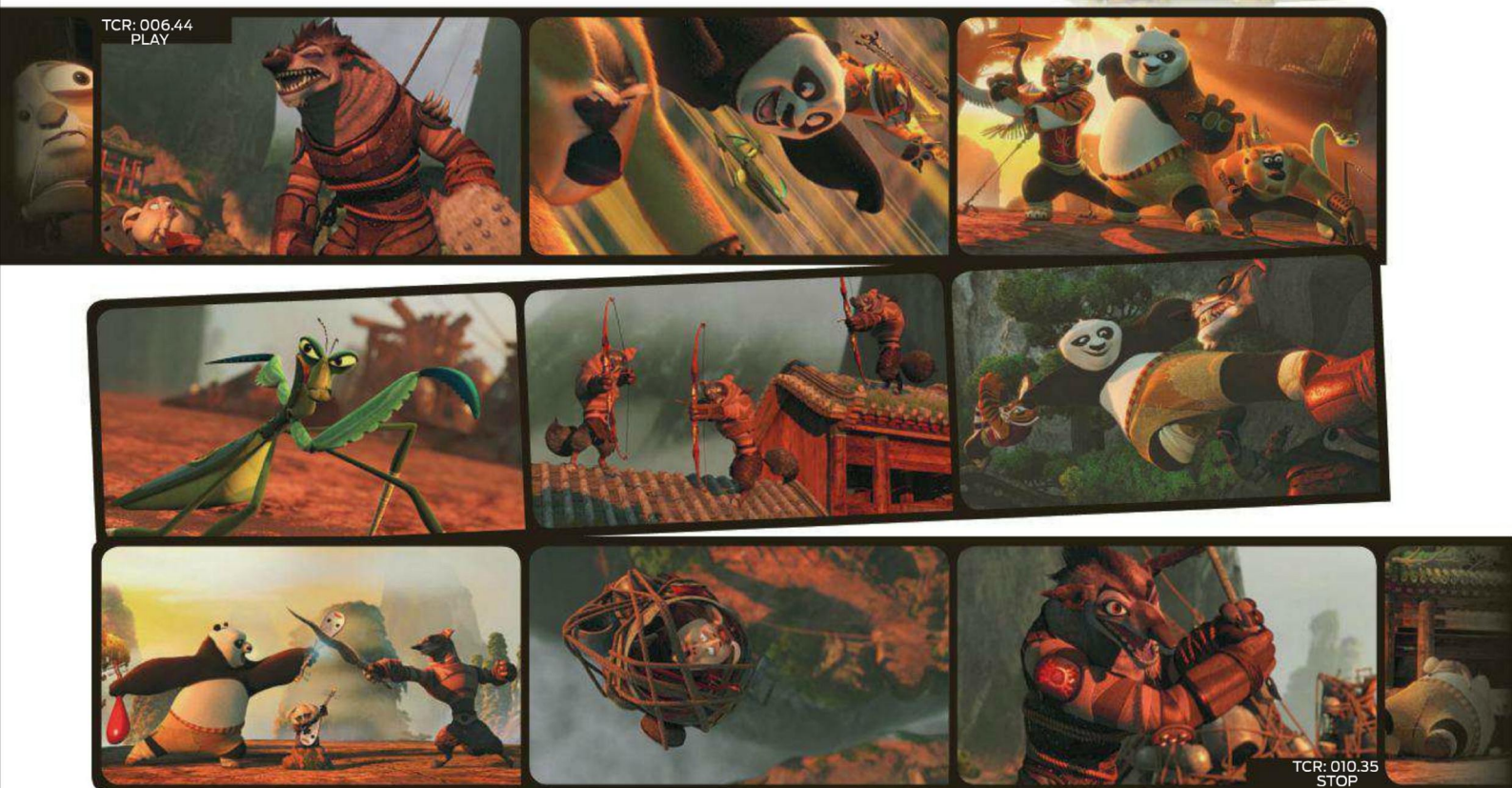
Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Demo screen

Kung Fu Panda 2 unleashes some melodious mayhem with this stunning Blu-ray brawl...



Kung Fu Panda 2

Paramount Home Entertainment → All-Region BD/R2 DVD → £25 Approx

Time code: 006.44 – 010.35



When it comes to dazzling home cinema experiences two choices spring to mind: the sonic thrills of an action-packed fight scene or the hi-def visuals served up by a blockbuster CG animation. And *Kung Fu Panda 2* mixes the two together to spectacular effect.

However, while the film offers up no end of impressive sequences that both look and sound sensational, it's the early fight scene where Po and The Furious Five come to the rescue of a village of rabbit musicians under attack from rampaging soldiers that stands out as something truly special.

Beginning with a witty nod to the first *Kung Fu Panda* (several early shots are a direct recreation of images from Po's dream of fighting alongside The Furious Five at the start of the original film), the sequence provides a tremendous showcase of the Blu-ray's flawless AVC 2.40:1 1080p transfer, thanks to its fast-moving motion, rich colours and intricate textures.

Musical martial arts

It's the inventive sound design that makes this slapstick sequence so effective, however. The recurrent use of musical instruments as weapons gives an unexpectedly melodic nature to the

brawling and offers plenty of scope for positional effects.

All of which ensures that Paramount's Dolby TrueHD 7.1 mix has plenty to work with, but it doesn't let the side down. Audio cues regularly make full use of the entire soundstage, matching the onscreen action as the animal characters leap, bounce and slither into battle while arrows fly through the air. And, while the tonal range and booming bass both impress, it's the seamless movement and precise 360-degree placement that makes this sequence such a delight. In fact, it's yet more proof that home cinema fans should never rule out upgrading to a 7.1 setup ●

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NEW | SAMSUNG LED TVs Coming Soon



Samsung ups the SmartTV stakes with the latest evolution in its range of connected sets. The Samsung ES8000 features face recognition and voice control, dual core processing for multi tasking and a built-in camera for Skype functionality. Screen sizes range from 40 to 75 inches.



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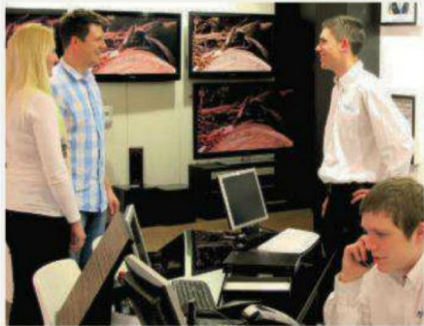
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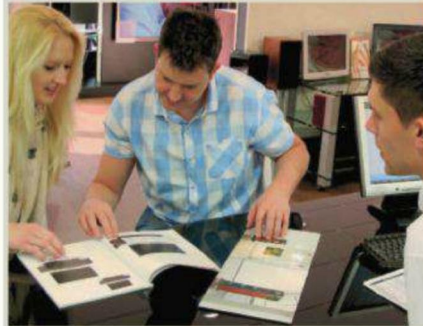
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Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have stores nationwide - each carries the very best in home cinema and hi-fi equipment on display, ready for you to watch, listen to and compare in our dedicated demonstration rooms.



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DENON DBP-1611UD UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER
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ALSO AVAILABLE: MARANTZ UD5005



DENON DBP-2012UD UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER
Award-winning universal disc player with home network capability. Compatible formats include SACD, DVD-Audio & 3D Blu-ray.
ALSO AVAILABLE: MARANTZ UD7006



PANASONIC DMP-BDT110 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER
This 3D player offers everything you could possibly hope for in a Blu-ray player.
ALSO AVAILABLE: DMP-BDT210 & DMP-BDT310



PIONEER BDP-LX55 UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER
New universal player featuring 3D playback, SACD support, Network functions and Pioneer's new iControlAV2 iPod/iPhone App.
ALSO AVAILABLE: PIONEER BDP-LX54 £179 OR LESS



PIONEER BDP-140 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER
Combines 3D playback with advanced networking features, superior audio performance and support for SACD.
ALSO AVAILABLE: SONY BDP-S380



YAMAHA BD-A1010 UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER
This new universal player perfectly complements the performance and design of Yamaha's AVENTAGE AV Receivers.
ALSO AVAILABLE: SAMSUNG BD-D5500 & BD-D6900



ARCAM FMJ AVR400 AV RECEIVER
The AVR400 has been developed as a more affordable way to access Arcam's legendary sound quality.
ALSO AVAILABLE: ARCAM FMJ AVR600



DENON AVR-1912 AV RECEIVER
This new AV receiver features built-in support for Apple's AirPlay, DLNA compatibility and several streaming media services.
ALSO AVAILABLE: DENON AVR-2312 & AVR-3312



ONKYO TX-NR609 AV RECEIVER
This award-winning AV receiver is both intuitive and easy to use and gets the most out of your movies, music and games.
ALSO AVAILABLE: ONKYO TX-NR509 & TX-NR809



ONKYO TX-NR5009 AV RECEIVER
Onkyo's new flagship home network receiver packs the ultimate in clean power, precise processing and abundant connectivity.
ALSO AVAILABLE: ONKYO PR-SC5509 & PA-MC5500



PIONEER SC-LX85 AV RECEIVER
This new AV receiver meets all the popular needs including Apple AirPlay for wirelessly streaming music from any compatible device.
ALSO AVAILABLE: PIONEER VSX-LX55 & SC-LX75



YAMAHA RX-A810 AV RECEIVER
Yamaha's range of AV receivers include many performance enhancing technologies and innovative features.
ALSO AVAILABLE: YAMAHA RX-A2010 & RX-A3010

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SAMSUNG

3D LED TV

D6530 32"
D7000 40" 46" 55"
D8000 40" 46" 55" 60"



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PANASONIC

3D PLASMA TV

VT30 42" 50" 55" 65"
GT30 42" 46" 50"
UT30 50"

PLASMA TV

G30 42" 50"

LED TV

E30 32" 37" 42"
E3 19" 24" 32"



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JVC DLA-X30 3D PROJECTOR

Experience 3D movies, games and sport at home. The DLA-X30 D-ILA projector will bring another dimension to your viewing enjoyment.



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The REL T5 delivers the exceptional low-bass performance, rugged build quality and unique design of larger REL models at a more affordable price.
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VELODYNE MICROVEE SUBWOOFER

Despite its diminutive size, the MicroVee delivers phenomenal output and impact in a beautiful, compact and sculptured aluminium cabinet.



OPTOMA HD33 3D DLP PROJECTOR

With 1080p resolution, 10,000:1 contrast ratio (500:1 ANSI Contrast ratio) and 1800 ANSI lumens brightness, Optoma's HD33 provides 3D and 2D at an affordable price.



YAMAHA YSP-4100 SOUNDBAR

Yamaha's YSP-4100 Digital Sound Projector provides many great features like HD Audio decoding, 1080p-compatible HDMI and AirWired™ technology for iPod / iPhone.

ALSO AVAILABLE: YSP-5100 & YSP-2200



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SUB WOOFER
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B&W MT-60D 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

The new MT-60D system twins M-I speakers with the stunning power and control of a PVID sub-woofer to create a sound that will keep you gripped, right up until the final frame.

ALSO AVAILABLE: MT-50 £1089



PANASONIC PT-AT5000E 3D PROJECTOR

Experience 3D movies, games and sport at home. This award-winning LCD projector delivers stunning picture quality with excellent dynamic range.



KEF AUDIO

T205 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

Enjoy serious hi-fi sound with KEF's ultra-slim T Series speakers. Featuring a new low profile woofer and vented tweeter for clear midrange and sparkling detail.



Q SERIES
The KEF Q series features an all new Uni-Q array with advanced bass technologies.



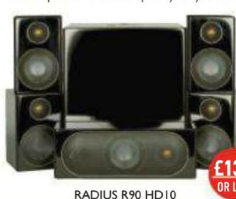
Q ACOUSTICS Q7000 SPEAKER PACKAGE

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MONITOR AUDIO

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BRONZE BX2 5.1



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TANNOY HTS-101 SPEAKER PACKAGE

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SELECT

→ **Buying Guide** Looking to purchase a new TV, AVR, speaker set, PJ, media player, BD deck, or surround sound system? Our Buying Guide is here to help. It's updated every issue with the latest reviews, and highlights the major specs so you can see at a glance what kit is right for you. And remember that the prices listed are the original RRP's – shop around and you'll often find them for less!



HCC Ratings key

- Officially awesome 1 2 3 4 5
- Essential purchase 1 2 3 4 5
- Does the job 1 2 3 4 5
- Disappointing 1 2 3 4 5
- Don't touch it 1 2 3 4 5

TV screens



Manufacturer	Model	Price	Size (inches)	3D type	Panel type	HDMI	Component	PC	Networking	Internet TV	Wi-fi ready	Freeview HD	Freesat HD	Issue	Rating	Comment
Hannspree	SV28LMMB	£200	28	-	LED	2	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	203	12345	Second-room TV. 16:10 ratio
LG	50PZ950T	£1,600	50	A	PDP	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	196	12345	Excellent all rounder, minor judder
LG	47LW550T	£1,200	47	P	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	194	12345	Web browser is multimedia icing
LG	42LV450U	£530	42	-	LED	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	200	12345	Lacks Freeview HD and net features
LG	55LW980T	£2,500	55	P	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	202	12345	Rear LED, passive TV is superb
Loewe	Individual Compose 3D	£5,000	46	A	LED	3	1	1	+	+	-	+	+	202	12345	Debut 3D screen offers motorised control and built-in HDD
Loewe	Individual 40	£5,500	40	-	LED	3	1	1	+	-	-	+	+	192	12345	Exquisite design and performance
Panasonic	TX-P55VT30	£2,700	55	A	PDP	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	197	12345	Sublime plasma is best-in-class
Panasonic	TX-L37DT30	£950	37	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	196	12345	Do-it-all 3D capable thin screen
Panasonic	TX-L42E3B	£600	42	-	LED	3	1	1	-	-	-	+	+	200	12345	No frills 42in LED seems expensive
Panasonic	TX-P50GT30	£1,800	50	A	PDP	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	195	12345	Stunning 2D and 3D mid-ranger
Panasonic	TX-P42ST30	£1,200	42	A	PDP	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	198	12345	Entry-level 3D plasma
Philips	40PFL8605	£1,300	40	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	-	-	192	12345	Accomplished 2D pics. Poor X-talk
Philips	50PFL7956	£2,000	50	P	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	205	12345	21:9 ratio TV for the masses
Philips	40PFL9706	£2,300	46	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	204	12345	Moth Eye tech reaps benefits
Samsung	UE40D6530	£1,100	40	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	198	12345	Brilliant pictures and Smart skills
Samsung	UE40D7000	£1,400	40	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	197	12345	Gorgeous TV, superb performance
Samsung	UE55D8000	£2,500	55	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	196	12345	Minor 3D X-talk, otherwise stunning
Samsung	UE60D8000	£4,300	60	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	200	12345	Big screen comes with a big price
Samsung	UE40D5520	£600	40	-	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	200	12345	Superb budget set is hard to fault
Samsung	PS64D8000	£2,400	64	A	PDP	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	204	12345	Giant plasma at a good price
Samsung	PS51D6900	£1,000	51	A	PDP	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	198	12345	Aggressively priced 3D bigscreen
Sharp	LC-37LE320	£700	37	-	LED	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	194	12345	Tasty set suited to a second room
Sharp	LC-46LE831E	£1,300	46	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	199	12345	Sharp's best LED screen ever
Sony	KDL-40CX523	£550	40	-	CCFL	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	200	12345	CCFL screen packs tons of features
Sony	KDL-40HX723	£1,300	40	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	201	12345	Excellent bigscreen all-rounder
Sony	KDL-40EX524	£800	40	-	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	197	12345	Great features, decent 2D-only pics
Sony	KDL-40NX713	£1,000	40	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	193	12345	Needs optional transmitter for 3D
Toshiba	42RL853	£600	42	-	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	199	12345	Affordable 42incher with few frills
Toshiba	42HL833	£500	42	-	LED	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	200	12345	Good HD pics but only two HDMI's
Toshiba	47VL863	£900	47	P	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	201	12345	Suffers from limited contrast
Toshiba	32UL863	£500	32	-	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	204	12345	Feature-rich 32incher impresses
Toshiba	55WL863	£1,800	55	A	LED	4	1	1	+	+	+	+	+	203	12345	CEVO-powered TV is first-rate

A= Active. P= Passive

TV SCREENS EXPLAINED...

PLASMA VS LCD. PLUS, 3D'S RIVAL SYSTEMS

The TV market is becoming increasingly dominated by LED-lit LCD screens that are much thinner than traditional cold cathode fluorescent lamp (CCFL) screens. For 42in and above, plasma display panels (PDPs) come into play. These generally offer superior black levels, better viewing angles and less 3D cross-talk, but less brightness.

Most 3D screens feature the Active system that uses expensive powered 3D specs to deliver full HD images to each eye. Passive 3D TVs have a filter over the screen and use non-powered specs with polarising filters. The glasses are cheap as chips, but the resolution of 3D is halved to 540 lines.

Editor's Choice...

SAMSUNG

55in → UE55D8000 → £2,500 Approx

Samsung's cost-no-object 9000 series launched in 2010 but still tops the brand's range – however, if you want Samsung's most technologically advanced screen then look no further than its 2011 8000 series. Stunning looks with pics to match.

Tested: Issue 196

For more info visit: www.samsung.co.uk



Blu-ray players



Manufacturer	Model	Price	BD Live storage	3D	Multi-channel analogue out	HDMI	USB	Online portal	Wi-fi ready	DVD-Audio/SACD	Issue	Rating	Comment
Arcam	FMJ-BDP100	£1,000	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Rock-solid build quality and pics to match
Cambridge Audio	Azur 650BD	£400	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	184	1 2 3 4 5	Top-notch build pays dividends with 2D fodder
Cambridge Audio	Azur 751BD	£800	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Universal deck performs well, needs more 'net
Denon	DBP-1611UD	£400	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Awful GUI but 3D pics are as good as it gets
Denon	DBP-2012UD	£750	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	198	1 2 3 4 5	High-performance player with battleship build
Dune	Smart BI	£240	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	198	1 2 3 4 5	Advanced networking features will wow techies
LG	BX580	£150	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	189	1 2 3 4 5	Reasonable BD pics, messy DVD upscaler
LG	BD670	£170	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Smart BD player offers great value
Marantz	UD7006	£800	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	200	1 2 3 4 5	Superior AV performance and tasty design
NAD	M56	£1,900	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	183	1 2 3 4 5	Motion processing issues spoil the day
Onkyo	BD-SP808	£500	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	195	1 2 3 4 5	Accomplished disc spinner. Slow disc loader
Onkyo	BD-SP809	£500	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	203	1 2 3 4 5	Performs well, but lacks features for this price
Oppo	BDP-95EU	£900	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	197	1 2 3 4 5	Even better build and results than the BDP-93EU
Oppo	BDP-93EU	£500	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	195	1 2 3 4 5	Awesomely good video and music performance
Oppo	BDP-83SE	£1,300	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	Precision engineered analogue audio output
Panasonic	DMP-BD75	£110	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	196	1 2 3 4 5	OK images, quick loader, underwhelming to use
Panasonic	DMP-BDT310	£260	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Terrific new GUI, refined sound and pictures
Panasonic	DMP-BDT300	£260	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Versatile, aging deck. Look out for discounts
Panasonic	BFT800EBK	£650	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	192	1 2 3 4 5	Built-in soundbar and iPod dock. Great 3D pics
Philips	BDP7600	£200	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	198	1 2 3 4 5	Feature-heavy deck with open web browser
Philips	BDP7500 MKII	£200	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Slickly designed with decent 2D and 3D images
Pioneer	BDP-LX53	£400	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	187	1 2 3 4 5	Basic and slow to load but impressive BD pics
Samsung	BD-D7500	£250	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	198	1 2 3 4 5	Style-centric wall-mountable 3D player
Samsung	BD-D6900	£300	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	195	1 2 3 4 5	Decent BD deck with built-in Freeview HD tuner
Samsung	BD-C6900	£255	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Quick loader, versatile deck. Passable pictures
Sharp	BD-HP90S	£290	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Slot-loading vertical design, expensive
Sony	BDP-S380	£130	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Budget player misses out on 3D and networking
Sony	BDP-S480	£150	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	198	1 2 3 4 5	Brilliant deck offers superior VOD at a low price
Sony	BDP-SX1	£300	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	202	1 2 3 4 5	Portable, WSVGA resolution, but outputs Full HD
Sony	BDP-S185	£90	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	204	1 2 3 4 5	Solid budget way to get IPTV and Blu-ray
Toshiba	BDX3100	£185	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Feature-light but does the job with solid pics
Toshiba	BDX3200	£150	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	197	1 2 3 4 5	Unexciting player can't compete with rivals
Yamaha	BD-A1010	£500	+	+	+	2	+	+	+	+	203	1 2 3 4 5	Universal deck with a few flaws
Yamaha	BD-S667	£300	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	189	1 2 3 4 5	Impressive but best partnered to a Yamaha AVR

BLU-RAY EXPLAINED...

MATCHING YOUR DECK TO YOUR AMP

Blu-ray decks are designed to deliver top-notch images (some do it much better than others of course) but Blu-ray is also about enjoying superior quality sound. When choosing a deck, bear in mind the connectivity and decoding features of your amplifier. If it's an older model that doesn't have HDMI inputs then you'll need a BD player with multichannel analogue audio outputs to enjoy hi-res surround sound formats. Most current AVRs have HDMI inputs that accept bitstreamed Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD MA, but not all receivers can cope with 3D video signals, in which case you'll need a deck with dual HDMI outputs – one for the amp, one for the TV.

Editor's Choice...

PANASONIC
DMP-BDT310 → £260 Approx



This second-gen 3D deck improves on its BDT300 predecessor thanks to new tricks and a lower asking price. Standout features – alongside the excellent 2D and 3D playback – are Skype functionality, 2D-3D conversion, faster loading times and a revamped GUI that takes usability to the next level. Motion-sensitive controls bring even more to the party.

Tested: Issue 194

For more info visit: www.panasonic.co.uk

AV Receivers



NEW ENTRY

NEW ENTRY

NEW ENTRY

Manufacturer	Model	Price	Claimed power	THX	Multi-ch in	HDMI in	HDMI out	3D	Dolby True HD	DTS HD MA	Networking	Net tuner	Issue	Rating	Comment
Anthem	MRX 700	£2,100	7 x 120W	+	+	4	1	+	+	+	+	+	195	1 2 3 4 5	Complex set-up, great EQ sound
Arcam	AVR400	£1,700	7 x 90W	+	+	5	1	+	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Beautifully built. Ace analogue audio
Denon	AVR-4311	£2,000	9 x 170W	+	+	6	2	+	+	+	+	+	193	1 2 3 4 5	Polished audio, Airplay streaming
Denon	AVR-1912	£450	7 x 90W	+	+	6	1	+	+	+	+	+	204	1 2 3 4 5	Lacks gusto and video scaling
Denon	AVR-2311	£800	7 x 135W	+	+	6	1	+	+	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	iPod dock but no networking
Denon	AVR-3312	£1,000	7 x 165W	+	+	7	2	+	+	+	+	+	202	1 2 3 4 5	New GUI, AirPlay as standard
Marantz	NR1602	£550	7 x 50W	+	+	4	1	+	+	+	+	+	201	1 2 3 4 5	Slimline AVR is forward-thinking
NAD	T 757	£1,500	7 x 60W	+	+	4	1	+	+	+	+	+	201	1 2 3 4 5	Limited features, but superb sound
Onkyo	TX-NR609	£500	7 x 60W	+	+	6	1	+	+	+	+	+	195	1 2 3 4 5	Comprehensive, stunning performer
Onkyo	TX-NR5009	£2,700	9 x 220W	+	+	8	2	+	+	+	+	+	203	1 2 3 4 5	Full-blooded 9-channel powerhouse
Onkyo	TX-SR308	£250	5 x 100W	+	+	3	1	+	+	+	+	+	191	1 2 3 4 5	Under specified and under powered
Onkyo	TX-NR1009	£1,300	9 x 180W	+	+	8	2	+	+	+	+	+	205	1 2 3 4 5	Smooth sound; THX Select2
Pioneer	VSX-520	£300	5 x 130W	+	+	3	1	+	+	+	+	+	191	1 2 3 4 5	Decent sound; spring-clip terminals
Pioneer	SC-LX83	£2,000	7 x 190W	+	+	3	1	+	+	+	+	+	186	1 2 3 4 5	Punchy audio with superb control
Pioneer	SC-LX85	£2,000	9 x 190W	+	+	7	2	+	+	+	+	+	205	1 2 3 4 5	Heady mix of power and features
Pioneer	VSX-920	£500	7 x 140W	+	+	4	1	+	+	+	+	+	185	1 2 3 4 5	Cool iPod integration, lacks guts a bit
Pioneer	VSX-2021	£800	7 x 150W	+	+	7	2	+	+	+	+	+	200	1 2 3 4 5	Class-leading control and RoomEQ
T+A	K8	£6,000	7 x 150W	+	+	3	1	+	+	+	+	+	205	1 2 3 4 5	High-end AVR with built-in BD deck
Yamaha	RXV-3067	£1,500	7 x 140W	+	+	8	2	+	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Superb and musical reproduction
Yamaha	RXV-367	£200	5 x 120W	+	+	4	1	+	+	+	+	+	191	1 2 3 4 5	Budget spec and sound to match
Yamaha	RXV-471	£300	5 x 105W	+	+	4	1	+	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Brilliant sounding entry-level AVR
Yamaha	RXV-1067	£850	7 x 105W	+	+	8	2	+	+	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	Optimised for cinema. Good connects

Systems



Manufacturer	Model	Price	3D	Claimed power	Configuration	Dolby True HD	DTS HD MA	HDMI in/out	Component	Online portal	Wi-fi ready	Issue	Rating	Comment
Harman/Kardon	BDS800	£1,100	+	525W	5.1	+	+	0/1	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	Nil by 1080p24. OK performance
LG	HB-965TZ	£600	+	1,100W	5.1	+	+	2/1	+	+	+	187	1 2 3 4 5	Lovely flat speakers and excellent GUI
Panasonic	SC-BTT775	£400	+	1,000W	5.1	+	+	2/1	+	+	+	198	1 2 3 4 5	A decent starter system for AV novices
Panasonic	SC-BTT350	£370	+	1,000W	5.1	+	+	0/1	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	Sonics don't match the versatility
Panasonic	SC-BT320	£400	+	1,000W	5.1	+	+	1/1	+	+	+	187	1 2 3 4 5	Pics are ok but a right pain to use
Panasonic	SC-BTT330	£350	+	1,000W	5.1	+	+	2/1	+	+	+	200	1 2 3 4 5	Affordable surround sound, old net portal
Samsung	HT-D6750W	£800	+	1,300W	5.1	+	+	2/1	+	+	+	197	1 2 3 4 5	Claims to be 7.1 but isn't
Samsung	HT-C9950W	£2,000	+	1,000W	7.1	+	+	2/1	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	Perfect style match for Samsung's TVs
Samsung	HT-C6730	£600	+	1,330W	7.1	+	+	1/1	+	+	+	187	1 2 3 4 5	Room-filling sonics; wireless rear speakers
Sony	BDV-E370	£500	+	850W	5.1	+	+	0/1	+	+	+	187	1 2 3 4 5	Good sound at low volume; SACD playback
Sony	BDV-E880	£400	+	1,000W	5.1	+	+	2/1	+	+	+	201	1 2 3 4 5	Full of features but average audio

Speakers



Manufacturer	Model	Price	Configuration	Front max power	Rear max power	Centre max power	Sub power	bookshelf	Issue	Rating	Comment
Acoustic Energy	Aegis Neo Max	£1,900	7.1	2 x 200W	2 x 170W	120W	200W	surr	199	12345	With 2 x 120W surrounds. An awful lot of speakers for the money
Acoustic Energy	Compact/Neo	£850	6.1	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	100W	200W	all	201	12345	6.1 system offers solid sonics
Artcoustic	Spitfire	£21,500	7.5	2 x 250W	2 x 250W	250W	250W	no	200	12345	Plus 2 x 150W surrounds. Wall-mountable speakers with might
Boston Acoustics	A Series	£2,200	5.2	2 x 200W	2 x 200W	175W	250W	no	205	12345	Value for money; detail, scale
Bowers & Wilkins	800 Diamond	£22,500	5.1	2 x 500W	2 x 120W	300W	1,000W	no	196	12345	Breathtaking sound, bonkers price
Cambridge Audio	Minx S325	£800	5.1	2 x 75W	2 x 75W	75W	300W	all	195	12345	Extraordinary power for dinky size
Canton	Chrono CL	£3,600	5.1	2 x 200W	2 x 100W	140W	250W	rear	204	12345	Looks and sounds great
Canton	Vento 800	£6,650	5.1	2 x 140W	2 x 80W	85W	750W	rear	194	12345	Fab definition & fidelity
Canton	125 MX	£400	5.1	n/a	n/a	n/a	140W	all	203	12345	Coherent sound, fiddly connectors
Definitive Technology	Mythos XTR-50	£2,400	3.0	2 x 100W	n/a	100W	n/a	no	202	12345	Wall-mountable flatpanel speakers are a classy solution
Image Audio	IA 8/5/C	£4,000	5.0	2 x 150W	2 x 150W	300W	n/a	no	195	12345	Excellent flat panel speakers
Jamo	A 101 HCS 5	£250	5.1	2 x 70W	2 x 70W	70W	200W	all	205	12345	Budget package does the business
Jamo	S426 HCS3	£560	5.1	2 x 100W	2 x 60W	90W	260W	rear	201	12345	Affordable floorstanding array
KEF	KHT-1505	£500	5.1	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	100W	200W	all	205	12345	Compact system with agile sub
KEF	Q Series	£2,400	5.1	2 x 130W	2 x 120W	150W	200W	rear	203	12345	Trickle-down tech reaps rewards
Magnat	Quantum 650	£1,700	5.1	2 x 350W	2 x 180W	180W	270W	rear	198	12345	Potent system at a good price
Monitor Audio	Apex	£2,425	5.1	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	200W	500W	rear	190	12345	Luxury styling and performance
Monitor Audio	Gold GX	£7,150	5.1	2 x 200W	2 x 100W	200W	650W	no	202	12345	Gorgeous build and sonics
Paradigm	MilleniaOne	£2,500	5.1	2 x 50W	2 x 50W	50W	300W	all	201	12345	Premium-priced sub/sat package
PSB	Image Series	£1,500	5.1	2 x 200W	2 x 150W	150W	150W	rear	199	12345	Look great, sound tasty
Scandyna	Micropod SE/ The Ball	£900	5.1	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	100W	60W	all	200	12345	Quirky design married to hi-tech drivers = slick style system
Tannoy	Definition	£8,200	5.0	2 x 400W	2 x 350W	350W	n/a	rear	197	12345	Worth every penny. Bring on the sub
Tannoy	Arena HL 300	£1,850	5.1	2 x 75W	2 x 75W	75W	300W	no	198	12345	High-end sub/sats with style
Tannoy	HTS-101	£500	5.1	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	100W	100W	all	203	12345	Solid-sounding surround package
Teufel	Columna 100	£350	5.1	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	100W	100W	no	195	12345	Energetic floorstanders. Ace sub
Teufel	Theatre 200	£800	5.1	2 x 140W	2 x 150W	140W	250W	all	195	12345	Bold sats, sub suffers colouration
Q Acoustics	Q7000	£800	5.2	2 x 100W	2 x 100W	100W	250W	all	204	12345	Class-leading sub/sat package

NEW ENTRY

NEW ENTRY

NEW ENTRY

5.1 CLASSIC HOME CINEMA SPEAKER LAYOUT...

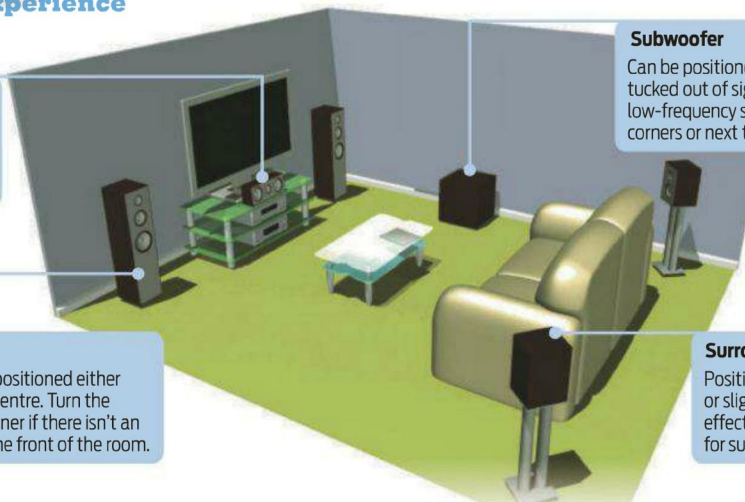
Follow these simple rules when laying out your system and you'll be guaranteed a great listening experience

Centre speaker

Handles most of the dialogue and onscreen effects. Should be positioned above or below the screen as close to it as possible.

Front speakers

Left and right speakers should be positioned either side of the screen, in line with the centre. Turn the speakers in slightly to face the listener if there isn't an even movement of sound across the front of the room.



Subwoofer

Can be positioned wherever it sounds best or can be tucked out of sight due to the non-directional nature of low-frequency signals. Be aware that close positioning in corners or next to walls can create a boomy effect.

Surround speakers

Position alongside the listener, pointing in or slightly behind the ears for a good surround effect. The back wall is not a good position for surrounds.

Projectors



NEW ENTRY

NEW ENTRY

Manufacturer	Model	Price (Original)	Type	Resolution	3D	HDMI	Component	12V trigger	Fan noise/dB	Lamp life/hr	Issue	Rating	Comment
BenQ	W1100	£900	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	22	2,500	197	1 2 3 4 5	Dynamic images, noisy fan
BenQ	W1000+	£750	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	26	5,000	193	1 2 3 4 5	Performance transcends price
Casio	XJ-A235	£1,000	DLP	1280 x 800	+	1	0	0	29	20,000	192	1 2 3 4 5	LED/DLP hybrid. Poor pics
Epson	EH-TW3600	£1,300	LCD	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	22	4,000	193	1 2 3 4 5	Bright pics but average black levels
Epson	MG-850HD	£650	LCD	1,280 x 800	+	1	1	0	29	5,000	205	1 2 3 4 5	Offers iPod compatibility
InFocus	SP8600	£800	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	30	2,500	198	1 2 3 4 5	Excellent sub-£1k projector
InFocus	SP8604	£2,500	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	3	1	2	28	3,000	196	1 2 3 4 5	Versatile PJ with decent pictures
InFocus	SP8602	£3,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	3	3	28	2,500	182	1 2 3 4 5	Good pics with minor operating flaws
JVC	DLA-X3	£3,600	D-ILA	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	20	3,000	193	1 2 3 4 5	Aces 2D images, X-talk with 3D
JVC	DLA-X7	£5,550	D-ILA	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	20	3,000	195	1 2 3 4 5	Brightness and black level to die for
JVC	DLA-HD990	£9,000	D-ILA	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	19	3,000	185	1 2 3 4 5	Gorgeous with amazing black levels
Optoma	HD67N	£500	DLP	1280 x 720	+	1	2	0	29	3,000	194	1 2 3 4 5	With so-so 3D using a 3D-XL adapter
Optoma	HD20	£900	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	1	2	0	29	4,000	176	1 2 3 4 5	One of the first budget Full HD PJs
Optoma	HD83	£2,400	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	2	22	4,000	203	1 2 3 4 5	3D PJ suffers from limited brightness
Optoma	HD33	£1,350	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	25	4,000	204	1 2 3 4 5	Wallet-friendly model supports 3D
Panasonic	PT-AE4000	£2,500	LCD	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	22	2,000	177	1 2 3 4 5	Filmic pictures and easy to setup
Panasonic	PT-AT5000	£3,200	LCD	1920 x 1080	+	3	1	2	22	4,000	202	1 2 3 4 5	Good connectivity, superb images
Runco	LS-HB	£7,500	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	n/a	2,000	205	1 2 3 4 5	Brilliant PJ for bright environments
Runco	LS-5	£7,500	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	2	2	30	4,000	187	1 2 3 4 5	3-chip performance from one chip
Sanyo	PLV-Z4000	£1,800	LCD	1920 x 1080	+	2	2	1	19	3,000	191	1 2 3 4 5	Quiet. Yellow-ish but filmic images
Sharp	XV-Z17000	£4,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	0	n/a	n/a	196	1 2 3 4 5	Living room friendly, 3D impresses
SIM2	MICO 40	£11,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	2	n/a	30,000	189	1 2 3 4 5	Eco-friendly LED-lit and versatile
SIM2	C3X Lumis Uno	£19,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	3	32	2,500	184	1 2 3 4 5	Supreme pics but lacks manual iris
SIM2	Lumis 3D-S	£30,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	3	n/a	3,000	199	1 2 3 4 5	Reference level 3D projector
Sony	VPL-VW90ES	£5,400	SXRD	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	22	n/a	192	1 2 3 4 5	Great option for a 3D CI build
Sony	VPL-VW85	£5,400	SXRD	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	20	3,000	174	1 2 3 4 5	Elderly but impressive SXRD PJ
Sony	VPL-HW20	£2,400	SXRD	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	0	20	n/a	190	1 2 3 4 5	Complex but capable of greatness
Sony	VPL-HW30ES	£3,100	SXRD	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	0	22	n/a	201	1 2 3 4 5	Sony's most affordable 3D offering
ViewSonic	Pro8200	£900	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	27	3,000	192	1 2 3 4 5	Falters with motion resolution
ViewSonic	Pro8450	£1,500	DLP	1280 x 1200	+	1	1	1	27	4,000	202	1 2 3 4 5	3D-ready business PJ lacks Full HD
Vivitek	H9080FD	£10,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	n/a	4,000	173	1 2 3 4 5	World's first 'lampless' LED projector
Vivitek	H1085	£1,000	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	2	1	1	26	4,000	179	1 2 3 4 5	Affordable DLP PJ could be quieter
Vivitek	H5080	£2,700	DLP	1920 x 1080	+	3	1	2	27	2,000	186	1 2 3 4 5	Excellent contrast and colour. Noisy

PROJECTOR SCREENS EXPLAINED...

FIXED FRAME OR ROLL AWAY?

When buying a projector, it's important to think about what screen you're going to partner it with. There are two main approaches – fixed-frame, where the screen is placed in a rigid frame and attached permanently to the wall, or 'roll-away' where it can be rolled up when not in use, including via neat, motorised systems. For the best picture quality and dedicated cinema rooms, fixed frame is preferable, as permanent screens generally stay more tautly stretched and deliver the most accurate pictures. Roll-away screens are more suited to when the room needs to double as a living room. Pricing, of course, varies depending on what size you need.

Editor's Choice...

SONY

SXRD → VPL-VW90ES
→ £5,400 Approx

Sony's range-topping projector marries an exemplary 2D picture performance with one of the best active shutter 3D systems we've seen. And, aside from its video prowess, it features smart design, solid build and versatile installation options.

Tested: Issue 192
For more info visit: www.sony.co.uk/biz



Media Players



Manufacturer	Model	Price	Type	HDD	3D	HDMI	DLNA	Online portal	USB playback	Wi-fi ready	Issue	Rating	Comment
AC Ryan	PlayOn! HD Essential	£130	Player	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	No wired Ethernet option, so you have to network via wi-fi dongle
AC Ryan	PlayOn! HD 2	£150	Player	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	202	1 2 3 4 5	Well featured and a good performer
Boxee	Boxee Box	£200	VOD	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	193	1 2 3 4 5	iPlayer access. Browser is a pain to use
Buffalo	Linkstation Pro LS-VL	£170	NAS	1TB	+	+	+	+	+	+	192	1 2 3 4 5	Speedy and reliable with Bit Torrent client. 1.5TB and 2TB versions are also available
Crystal Acoustics	PICOHD5.1	£50	Player	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Small, no frills media player
Crystal Acoustics	Media Matchbox	£55	Player	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	202	1 2 3 4 5	Extensive file support includes lossless audio and BD ISOs. Keenly priced, ultra portable
Digital Stream	DPS-1000	£90	VOD	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	196	1 2 3 4 5	Good for VOD services, no optical out
Iomega	StorCenter IX2-200	£215	NAS	2TB	+	0	+	+	+	+	182	1 2 3 4 5	Pocket-sized powerhouse with handy one-touch USB copy
Iomega	Screenplay MX	£140	Player	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	194	1 2 3 4 5	No optical audio out or hi-res audio
iXtreamer	iXtreamer	£150	NAS	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Slick player with space for SATA HDD
Netgear	NeoTV 550	£140	Player	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Solid offering but file support isn't comprehensive
Netgear	ReadyNAS NVX	£500	NAS	1TB	+	0	+	+	+	+	185	1 2 3 4 5	Tank-like NAS can accommodate up to 8TB of storage – a serious bit of hardware
Popbox	Popbox 3D	£140	Player	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	199	1 2 3 4 5	Offers BBC iPlayer and MKV3D file support
Sony	SMP-N100	£120	VOD	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	193	1 2 3 4 5	Bravia Internet TV and streaming aplenty
Synology	USB Station 2	£85	Player	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	193	1 2 3 4 5	Simply add your own USB hard disks
Synology	DS410	£400	Player	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	Accommodates up to 8TB of SATA drives
Teufel	MediaStation 6	£270	Player	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	200	1 2 3 4 5	Freeview HD totting player has hideous UI
Toshiba	Stor.E TV+	£170	Player	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	195	1 2 3 4 5	Tosh's cute unit supports a wide range of formats
Verbatim	MediaShare	£130	NAS	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	188	1 2 3 4 5	Stylish, well-featured NAS
WD	WD TV Live Hub	£200	Player	1TB	+	1	+	+	+	+	190	1 2 3 4 5	Superb multi-format player
WD	WD TV Mini	£48	Player	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	189	1 2 3 4 5	Tiny media player lacks HDMI output

HOME CINEMA Choice

ISSUE
#207 ON SALE
Apr 5

→ In the next issue

HCC Awards We dish out the gongs to the best AV hardware of the last year

Modern Marvel An in-depth look at the movie studio behind *The Avengers*

Big in Japan Behind-the-scenes at Sony's Tokyo R&D plant

→ On test

FOCAL VIVA UTOPIA High-end surround speakers **PHILIPS 42PFL7666** Mid-range Ambilight TV

YAMAHA RX-A3010 9.1-channel AV receiver

LEXICON DD-8 Slimline eight-channel power amp

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HOME CINEMA Choice

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Recorders



Manufacturer	Model	Price (*plus subscription)	Type	HDD/GB	HDMI	Component	Scart	USB Media	Online portal	Wi-fi ready	Issue	Rating	Comment
Panasonic	DMR-PWT500	£400	F'view HD	320	1	0	0	+	+	+	202	1 2 3 4 5	BD/PVR combi needs bigger HDD
Echostar	HDS-600RS	£350	F'sat HD	500	1	0	2	+	+	-	196	1 2 3 4 5	Solid PVR with built-in SlingPlayer feature
Panasonic	DMR-BWT700	£500	F'view HD	320	1	0	1	+	+	+	197	1 2 3 4 5	Complex with Blu-ray recorder and 3D player
Sagemcom	DTR67320T	£150	F'view	320	1	1	2	+	-	-	201	1 2 3 4 5	No HD tuners, but can import/export media
Samsung	SMT-S7800	£280	F'sat HD	500	1	0	2	+	+	+	197	1 2 3 4 5	Good recorder, scant internet TV offering
Samsung	BD-DT7800	£280	F'view HD	500	1	1	0	+	+	+	201	1 2 3 4 5	Can't record two channels at once
Sony	SVR-HDT1000	£350	F'view HD	1TB	1	0	0	+	-	-	204	1 2 3 4 5	Large HDD; iPlayer but no Sony hub
Toshiba	HDR5010	£200	F'view HD	500	3	1	1	+	-	-	201	1 2 3 4 5	Good twin-tuner offering, but no iPlayer yet
TVonics	DTR-Z500HD	£225	F'view HD	500	3	0	1	+	-	-	201	1 2 3 4 5	Firmware has added BBC iPlayer

Subwoofers



Manufacturer	Model	Price	Sealed/ported	Power (RMS)	Frequency response/Hz	Driver size	Dimensions/ (w x h x d)mm	Weight/kg	Issue	Rating	Comment
BK Electronics	XXLS400DF	£410	S	400W	19-120	12in	400 x 460 x 400	28	196	1 2 3 4 5	Clean and tight; great value
Bowers & Wilkins	DB1	£3,250	S	1,000W	17-45	12in x 2	460 x 490 x 410	44	197	1 2 3 4 5	Bipolar arrangement, ripping
Paradigm	Seismic 110	£1,250	S	850W	18-150	10in	298 x 343 x 320	17	188	1 2 3 4 5	AKA The Bulldog and has real bite
Paradigm	SUB1	£5,000	S	1,700W	35-150	8in x 6	505 x 516 x 455	50	197	1 2 3 4 5	Unorthodox hexagonal shape
SV Sound	PC 12 Plus DSP	£1,250	P	800W	10-150	12.5in	1,022 x 407	39	198	1 2 3 4 5	Cylindrical sub for big spaces
Velodyne	DD18+	£5,800	S	1,250W	8.8-300	18in	530 x 580 x 650	65	197	1 2 3 4 5	Huge 18in driver, muscular sound
Velodyne	EQ-Max12	£800	P	225W	25-120	12in	416 x 454 x 457	28	204	1 2 3 4 5	EQ system makes placement easy
Velodyne	SPL-800 Ultra	£1,150	S	1,200W	16-240	8in	267 x 280 x 356	33	201	1 2 3 4 5	Compact but potent; nice finish
Wharfedale	SPC-10	£300	S	215W	35-120	10in	352 x 382 x 305	11	202	1 2 3 4 5	Affordable, but lacks grunt

Soundbars



Manufacturer	Model	Price	Power	Separate sub	Sub power	HDMI in	HDMI out	Dolby True HD	DTS HD MA	Dimensions/ (w x h x d)mm	Weight/kg	Issue	Rating	Comment
LG	HLX-56S	£750	210W	+	150W	2	1	+	+	1000 x 95 x 207	6.8	204	1 2 3 4 5	Stylish and full of features
Lenco	SB-100	£140	80W	-	N/A	0	0	-	-	540 x 110 x 165	1.4	199	1 2 3 4 5	Budget, but '3D' effect is good
Orbitsound	T12	£300	80W	+	20W	0	0	-	-	605 x 100 x 110	2.8	186	1 2 3 4 5	Offers integrated iPod dock
Panasonic	SC-HTB520	£300	120W	+	120W	1	1	-	-	1002 x 80 x 50	2.5	199	1 2 3 4 5	HDMI but no TrueHD/DTS-HD
Samsung	HWC450	£250	160W	+	120W	0	0	-	-	957 x 92 x 46	2.3	182	1 2 3 4 5	Affordable, has wireless sub
Yamaha	YSP-2200	£800	132W	+	100W	3	1	+	+	435 x 137 x 350	6	196	1 2 3 4 5	Effective surround sound

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POINT OF VIEW

This issue, **Richard Stevenson** takes umbrage to some sweeping generalisations and shows off his street-fightin' talents

I was propping up a bar after a conference earlier this month and found myself speaking to a man who referred to himself as 'a banker'. We live a public space that makes bankers about as popular as *Die Hard*'s John McClane wearing that sandwich-board sign on the streets of Harlem, so fair play to his admission. However, on enquiring about my line of work he noted that I must be worried because 'that niche end of the electronics market is a dinosaur dying on its arse'.

Damn, he went down hard. I was overcome with a sudden, violent sneeze that to the casual observer may have been mistaken for a well-aimed Glasgow kiss. As he lay there on the floor clutching his nose, I noted that home cinema was set to be a key factor in global economic recovery, that it would single-handedly save the music industry and was a driving force in the roll-out of local renewable energy generation.

Economically, Blu-ray sales were one of only two established consumer electronics-related sectors that achieved double digit growth in 2011, the other being tablets, of course. According to the Digital Entertainment Group, BD discs were up 11 per cent, grossing some \$2bn throughout last year. Another \$1.9bn was spent on video on demand content – mostly movies. As there are only seven billion people in the world, that is equivalent to every man, woman and child on the planet spending 50 cents a year watching home cinema content. As digital distribution continues to grow and projects like UltraViolet (maybe...) get off the ground, home cinema-related expenditure will be an ever greater percentage of the world's GDP.

Hi-def hijacking

The music industry has been in a state of flux for some time and is desperately seeking ways to monetise content that consumers can otherwise share with each other for free. By hijacking Blu-ray, media publishers can pack in 5.1- or 7.1-channel

surround sound, music videos, hi-def concert footage, interviews and special features. Not only does music on Blu-ray command a premium over a CD or MP3 download, it is a whole lot harder to copy for the average user and the huge files size make it far less convenient to share.

And there are plenty of people prepared to pay extra for better quality, too. Just look at the rise-and-rise of premium car brands like Audi, Mercedes and even Aston Martin. For music that I really want to listen too, given the choice of an uncompressed 192kHz/24bit stereo recording on Blu-ray for £20 or a torrent downloaded MP3 for free, it would be the paid-for Blu-ray every time. **I consider services like Spotify, lastFM, Pandora and even basic file sharing as the new 'radio'** – introduction services guiding my purchasing of premium content. With DRM a joke and small MP3 files easier to share than a pack of Wrigley's, I find it amazing that services like iTunes don't yet offer a premium high-resolution music download service. If rhetoric from this year's D:Dive into Media technology conference is to be believed, artists like Neil Young are working with Apple to develop just such services and new generations of ultra-iPods to play them on.

Then there is home cinema fuelling local renewable power generation. Okay, I might have been getting to the tenuous end of my argument at this point but I have personally installed some solar PV panels to assist my gratuitous electricity consumption. All I need now is eight inches of snow to melt and uncover them.

By which point a crowd of people had gathered around the prone figure, mostly giving me stern looks and fingering the '9' key on their mobile phones. 'He's a banker,' I blurted. There was a small ripple of applause and they dispersed ●

Are you spending less on your home cinema hobby than before? Let us know via letters@homecinemachoice.com

Mild-mannered AV geek **Richard Stevenson** didn't really attack a banker. Heck, he couldn't knock the skin off the top of a cold bowl of custard



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